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MAURICE ELVINGTON.

VOLUME III.

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# MAURICE ELVINGTON;

OR,

ONE OUT OF SUITS WITH FORTUNE.

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

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EDITED BY WILFRID EAST.

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IN THREE VOLUMES.

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## MAURICE ELVINGTON.

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### CHAPTER I.

I HAVE alluded—and that with reluctance—to one whose name will frequently be repeated in connexion with my own in the course of the following pages. There is a partnership in penury as well as in wealth, and when things come to the worst, we are not unapt or unwilling to form it. The time having gone by for prudential considerations, we only care to seize the pleasures and enjoyments of the fleeting moment. Nay, we sometimes fulfil duties—and that at all hazards—which in our more prosperous days we should have postponed in obe-

dience to the warning voice of prudence. The reader will learn further as he accompanies me in my story.

Having become utterly reckless, and forfeited—at the time, with little or no regret—what worldly position and good repute my downfal in the world had left to me, when things came to the worst I hid my head in an obscure part of the metropolis. Here, like other adventurers who turn up a prize when they least expect it, I lighted upon a treasure—for such it was—which, had I valued it sufficiently, might have been so to me. I encountered by the merest accident one who was walking through a lowly path of life—among its pitfalls and allurements—with the utmost purity and virtue. Her name was Clarissa.

It is not my intention to enter into the particulars of the circumstances under which we first encountered each other. They would not interest the reader; and if he is acted upon by the same feelings which influence me, a relation of them might rather offend than gratify. When my

mind dwells—and when does it not?—on this young creature, her goodness and purity, the almost religious harmony of my thoughts does not love to be disturbed by the recollection of any event mean or trivial in connexion with her. We are now separated—in what manner will be learned in the following pages; and with the same exalted feeling in which I now recall her to my mind, I would fain have her treasured up in that of another.

To call in the aid of an illustration. Magdalen, Agnes, or Rosalia, passed their lives among the lowly, or in an ascetic self-accepted poverty; but it is not thus that the great painters of Rome, Florence, or Parma, love to depict them to their worshippers. The Magdalen of Correggio is a fair-haired votarist, the painted union of feminine beauty with the immortal purity of the nascent saint. Nor are the details surrounding this beautiful creation mean or sordid. The graceful penitent reclines in a sombre but magnificent landscape—a solemn cavern overhung by beetling rocks. Nothing is introduced to destroy the subdued but

exalted feeling awakened in the mind as we hang over this picture. With the same feeling—exalted, religious—which the art of the painter told him he must inspire in the breasts of those worshipping at the shrine of the saint, do I regard the memory of Clarissa; and my mind refuses to dwell, even for a few minutes, on any event which may disturb the chastened solemnity of the recollections respecting her I have learned to cherish.

However, I am compelled to mention that on one occasion I stood forward as her protector. The deportment of a woman may be correct beyond that of the generality of her sex, and yet there may be a time of her life when she stands in need of the arm of a husband or brother. Such a period occurred in the solitary life of Clarissa, and it was then that by mere accident she found me ready to take her part. After this we occasionally met—indeed we lived in the same street; but although I discovered on more than one occasion that I had earned my neighbour's gratitude, she was too reserved to allow more than a guarded intimacy

to grow up between us. It was evidently her wish to regard me as one who had been her champion in a time of need, but her prudence did not sanction any familiar intercourse to result from our casual encounter.

And far gone as I was, I respected this feeling on her part. However disordered my habits might have become in other respects, they still preserved their healthy tone in this : I entertained, as I had always done, a sincere respect for an upright woman. I had enjoyed the society of such from my boyhood, and in the more brilliant portion of my career had met at the houses of the parents of my college-friends many ladies who combined all the fine qualities of mind and person that usually distinguish English ladies of their class. After my downfal, I made the acquaintance of an innocent and unaffected girl, carefully educated under an excellent mother, in the family of Mr Gently. The Lady Venetia Markham, of course, knew how to respect herself, fenced in as she was by the dignity and splendour of her rank and station.

But the case to which I am now alluding was far different. There were very few safeguards here for the virtue that nevertheless walked carefully on its daily errand through the lanes and alleys of life, stepping aside from its pollutions and temptations. If it had willed to stray a while, there were many allurements to desert the right path, and every facility open for a return to it when sated. It kept on the tenor of its way nevertheless steadily and carefully, disregarded by most, applauded by none ; unless the respect of a person of whom his very best friends, if he had any left, could at the time have given a very indifferent character, was worthy of being taken into account.

Thus time went on, and I saw little or nothing of Clarissa. I still pursued my downhill path in life, and, as matters turned out subsequently, it was well she knew so little of the sad wreck I was making of health and reputation. Nor did she, perhaps, acknowledge to herself that she had any occasion for solicitude concerning a person who she was unwilling to confess had made any

inroad upon her affections. He had merely extended to her the protection due from any man of generous feeling to a woman of character, and had no claims upon her regard for such an ordinary display of proper feeling.

But it was when I was seized with the dangerous illness, the course of which I have just narrated, that the deep earnest nature of the woman revealed itself. She then repaid doubly and trebly any aid I afforded her at a time of need ; and that at a critical moment for the preservation of my life and sanity. I should have fared badly with the people among whom chance had cast me, without her courageous and intelligent protection. I was not conscious myself of what passed at the time, but learned from Clarissa that the people in whose house I lodged, although not wanting in good feeling, allowed their dreadful fear of contagion to gain the upper hand of it, and, after a consultation with their neighbours, persons as ignorant as themselves, determined to get rid of me at all hazards. They all agreed that I was at the last gasp, but

determined notwithstanding to remove me to the first hospital within reach.

Such an inconsiderate step as this would probably have freed them from the encumbrance of their patient in a very summary manner; but a Guardian Angel, in the shape of Clarissa, came to the rescue. When she heard of my illness, her sagacity at once told her that I was now the person needing protection, and, deeming that she was under an obligation to me, she determined to repay it. Taking matters into her own hand, she first inquired of my landlady if she had yet entered my room; but the woman, although she said a neighbour had been courageous enough to do so, confessed that, for her own part, she was too frightened to follow her example. Clarissa reproved her sharply for her inhumanity, and went boldly up to the bed where I was lying, by this time delirious. She saw at a glance that, in the critical state I was in, I could not outlive a removal of any kind, and, carrying matters with a high hand, sent the woman round for a medical man who lived in the next

street. The landlady complied, although sullenly, and, finding the apothecary at home, brought him back with her. As soon as he saw his patient, he shook his head at the idea of removing such a case, but declined to take upon himself the responsibility of carrying any one through a violent fever, unless a hired nurse were immediately procured for him.

This requisition of the medical man apparently sealed my fate. I was alone and friendless, without any known means of support: what I had on my person would have barely carried me through a week when in health. As for the people around me, the most prosperous of them were just earning their daily bread, and scarcely that. A general pause ensued, and the silence was only broken by protestations from all that they could render me no assistance; and this was really the case: for the poor, when they have the means, are more charitable than persons in a higher walk of life. Clariissa saw at once that, to save my life, she must take the office of nurse upon herself, and defray

the expenses of my illness and recovery. She pledged herself to do so, and kept her word—at what cost and sacrifice of self I was never able to ascertain. She was ever ready to listen to an account of the charitable actions of others, and accord their humanity the credit due to it; but she was tongue-tied when her own good deeds were the subject of conversation or inquiry.

It followed, as a matter of course, that Clarissa's abnegation of self was not altogether to the taste of the ignorant people about us. They had hung back themselves, and, not having the least idea that she considered herself under an obligation to the person on a sick-bed, could not understand why any one should feel more than ordinary concern in the recovery of a stranger. Indeed they were only too ready at all times to impute a bad motive as the principle of any action they could not comprehend, and in this case made their minds up that Clarissa's humanity admitted of no favourable interpretation. My landlady, for instance, was no sooner satisfied that I had sufficiently re-

covered to understand what was passing around me, than she indulged herself every now and then in a few sneers, of which she took care that I should not miss the meaning. She insinuated that Clarissa was not only acting under the guidance of unworthy motives at present, but that her past history —of which, of course, she knew nothing—was not altogether creditable to her. Some months afterwards, when I had a right to claim the confidence of my kind nurse, I learned her story from her own lips. There was nothing in it requiring concealment: it was a sorrowful one, certainly—one of negligence, and probably a lapse from the right path, of which an innocent child became the victim—but there it ended. I will relate it as nearly as I can in her own words.

## CHAPTER II.

CLARISSA was brought up, she told me, in an old secluded house, situated somewhere in the outskirts of London. It had once been a country mansion, she believed, and an air of venerable decay hung over it. There was a long narrow court before the house, separated from the high-road by an iron railing and two gate-posts surmounted by stone-balls cut into diamond facets. It contained two staircases—one a stately flight of shallow steps with richly carved oak balusters leading to a suite of rooms kept for the most part closed, and the other that in common use by the domestics; for the only inhabitants in Clarissa's time besides herself, were

two female servants and a very infirm old lady, with hair of a silver gray, who seldom or never quitted her bedchamber.

Clarissa—then a young child—was left entirely to herself; no one appeared to care for her. She was allowed to wander over the house at will, provided she made little or no noise and kept out of the way of the upper servant, an ill-tempered, sour sort of person. She rambled, she told me, from chamber to chamber in a listless manner, and amused herself in the best way she could. Her favourite rooms were those that had been closed, and which indeed she had been forbidden by the servant to enter. She one day, however, made the discovery that the doors were not locked, and although the window-shutters were fastened, her eyes became so accustomed to the darkness that she could grope about them in perfect confidence, guided by the few straggling rays of light that forced themselves through the crevices of the shutters.

One of these apartments was a long narrow

drawing-room, extending along the whole front of the mansion. It was furnished with stately oaken chairs with embroidered cushions, and a faded carpet, carefully covered over. A grim harpsichord stood against the wall opposite to the windows, and two lustres of yellow time-stained glass rattled in a strange manner with every step of the child, who was half-fearful at the noise she made in that ghostly old chamber. Adjoining this room ran a long gallery, with the shutters merely put to, so that she was able to move their folds back and take a pleasant view of the solitary old garden and orchard, which were allowed to run waste and grow up into a perfect wilderness. This gallery had little or no furniture, with the exception of a few chairs and a rickety table, on which had been left lying a battledore and a few other broken toys.

Clarissa, child as she was, came to visit these every day, and would loiter over them for hours, until her fancy began to conjure up images of the children who had once lived and played in that strange disconsolate old house, now so still

that one could hear a pin fall in any part of it; until the force of her imagination grew too strong for her, and she heard shrill little voices whispering from the adjoining rooms, telling her that if she would only unlock the doors, the owners of the toys would come out and play with them once more.

It is not surprising that in a place like this Clarissa grew up a quiet dreamy girl, and laid the foundation of a reserved temper in after-life. She told me that, as far back as she could remember, thoughts not usual for a child came into her mind, haunting her even at night and hindering her from sleep—but that she kept them all to herself, for if she had dropt a hint concerning them, even to the servants, they would have chidden her severely, desiring her not to be troublesome. Child as she was, she was anxious to know who were her parents—whether she had a father and mother living—and if so, why she was separated from them. Her curiosity became so excited at last, that she ventured to say a few words to the old

servant on the subject ; but the woman, who scolded her for asking the question, merely answered, " that the old lady, her mistress, had taken her out of charity, and would send her away to a boarding-school immediately if she heard that she had been curious or impertinent."

Up to this time Clarissa had occasionally caught sight of her aged protectress. The old lady would at distant intervals send for the child up into her bedroom, and hear her read a chapter in the Bible, dismissing her with a sort of severe kindness, as she kissed her and bade her be a good girl. She told me that the personal appearance of this aged mistress of the house always made a very great impression upon her. She had a fine venerable figure, and although so infirm that she rose from her chair with difficulty, retained a dark bright eye, and many other remains of personal beauty. Clarissa always stood in great awe of her, and discovered, with the instinct of her years, that her presence in the room was only endured for a time, and that she was sent for as seldom as possible.

After she had offended the servant by her questions respecting her parentage, many weeks elapsed before she was summoned again; and when the old lady at last desired to see her, Clarissa found that her protectress had grown so feeble since she had last sent for her into the bedroom, that she could only just collect her ideas sufficiently to find a few words in which she reproved the child for her curiosity, and threatened her with the loss of her favour if she ever dared to indulge an inquisitive disposition again.

After this reproof, which made, as it was intended to do, a strong impression upon Clarissa, she of course held her peace, although she never lost sight of the question that puzzled her. In an old dining-parlour, which she never remembered as having been used, hung several portraits. One of these was of a gentleman with loose powdered hair, and that adjoining it bore some resemblance to the present mistress of the mansion, but taken when she was in the maturity of middle-life. Between these pictures were two others which

hung in a much better light, and these so fascinated Clarissa that she would linger before the portraits for whole mornings together, fancying that the persons they represented moved their lips and were speaking to her. One of them was the resemblance of a lady dressed in white satin, with a long stomacher and rich esclavage round her neck. The hair was taken off her forehead in the fashion of the day, but one could see that it was dark like her eyes, and that she bore in other respects a striking resemblance to the lady whose portrait hung next her own. The remaining picture, which represented a beautiful young girl of eighteen or nineteen years of age, with a sweet melancholy expression of countenance, made such an impression upon Clarissa, that, after standing before her portrait the whole day long, she would dream of it at night, fancying that the lovely young creature came to her bedside and leant over her shedding tears, and calling her her own unhappy neglected child. She became so excited by one of these dreams that she again mustered

courage to ask the old servant if the four pictures in the dining-parlour represented her own relations, and was again reprimanded with great severity. The woman told her that two of the portraits were those of her mistress and her husband, and the others of their only daughter and grandchild, both of whom were long since dead. She added, that her mistress had given strict injunctions that their names even should never be mentioned, and that if Clarissa ever dared to allude to them in her presence, it might cause her a dangerous fit of illness.

A few months after the child had been sent for and reprimanded, her aged protectress died, and she soon discovered by the conversation of the two servants, that they were puzzled what to do with her. Everything in the house was sold off by auction, including the four portraits; and Clarissa recollected, as if it were yesterday, standing weeping by the window as she saw two rough men throw that of the beautiful young girl carelessly into a broker's cart. When they were about to

drive away, she told me that she rushed frantically into the fore-court, and declared that no one should separate her from her mother; but the men only stared, and paid no attention to her tears and entreaties. After the sale, the old servant, who had been more unkind to the child since her mistress's death than ever, left the house without bidding her good-bye, and she saw no more of her; the housemaid, a rough good-natured girl, returned home to her own relations, poor people who lived in a cottage in the fields near Edmonton Church.

Finding that Clarissa had been left by her fellow-servant on her hands, the young woman seemed very much annoyed, but took her home with her nevertheless, declaring that at any rate she could not stand by and see a fellow-creature sent to the workhouse. The parents and sisters of the girl, who were hard-working people, were not at all pleased with the present their relation brought home to them, but did not treat her with any actual want of kindness. When the girl went out

to service again, they kept her with them, not knowing what else to do with her; but she was compelled to fare as they did, as a matter of course, and wear the rough clothes of a poor cottage-girl, which at first almost broke her heart. One of the girl's sisters supported herself by her needle, and made Clarissa useful in her business, compelling the child to sew by her side, and if she ever caught her idle, reproaching her with being thrown on the charity of poor people.

The change of dress and food, coupled with this close confinement to one small room in a damp cottage, tried the unhappy orphan's health severely—indeed, she felt the effects of the wretched time she spent there for many years afterwards. The manner in which she had been brought up—lonesome and neglected as it was—did not resemble that of one of the children of the poor after all; and her long rambles about the house, aided by a habit she had acquired of reading books far beyond her years, had quite unfitted her to associate with the class of people among whom her unhappy lot had thrown

her. Indeed, her feelings were at first almost crushed within her, and she often looked mournfully, she told me, out of the cottage-window, at the green, quiet churchyard, where the clergyman and mourners were standing over a new-made grave, wishing, as she saw them slip the ropes and lower a child's coffin, that it held her own remains instead of perhaps those of some cherished darling of fond and heart-broken parents, and prayed that it would please God to release her from her own life of misery before the passing bell again tolled in the church-tower.

After Clarissa had lived three or four years with these people, a female cousin of theirs, who frequently came to see them, noticed that she had grown up a tall girl, clever at her needle, and made herself useful in various ways. The woman, who was a dress-maker and kept several apprentices, offered to take her as one of them; and as the people of the cottage were only too glad to get rid of their burden on any terms, she went to her new mistress the next week. This person, who was cursed with

a most furious temper, had once or twice been brought before the magistrates for ill-using her apprentices; but with Clarissa, who had no protector, she gave way to perfect fits of frenzy, and rendered the poor orphan's life a burden to her; but as the latter had naturally a firm temper, and had never forgotten that she was above the people with whom she was compelled to associate, she took a quiet resolution to free herself from this ill-usage at all hazards, and at last carried it into effect by running away.

She was at that time, she told me, about sixteen years of age, tall, and no doubt beautiful; for even when I became acquainted with her, six years afterwards, she might be fairly reckoned a handsome woman. She had no knowledge of the world, however, and was in many respects artless even for her age; it is therefore not surprising that, when she had flown away from her prison like a startled bird, and that without clothes or money, she was perfectly at a loss what step to take next. She had no friends to seek, no roof to shelter

her, and was alone in the wide desolate waste of populous London. For twelve hours did she walk up and down the crowded streets, until the lamps were lit, and happy people, released from their day's business, who had homes to go to and families to rejoice, began to hurry past her.

The shops were next closed, and idle men, as they walked along, began to look in the face of the disconsolate wanderer with a scrutinizing gaze; wanton women tittered and jeered at one whom they regarded as a new rival in their shameless calling; and so as the night drew on, she feared lest insult and suspicion should be added to destitution. A dark cloud rose over her mind as these thoughts began to master her: she felt the cruelty of a world which too often renders existence an intolerable burden, and want and misery stared her full in the face. In the extremity of her despair, she loathed the gift of a life she had never solicited—a life which could be renounced at will, and the untold agonies of years exchanged for one swift, and perhaps after all, painless struggle.

Full of thoughts like these—she always confessed that they were sinful ones—which gradually mastered her reason, she found herself at midnight leaning over the parapet of one of the bridges, looking down wistfully into the dark sluggish flood, which she saw faintly lighted up by the lamps on the other side of the bank, as the strong tide then running down carried it past them. Something whispered to her that it only required one resolute plunge, and there below her was a bed which, dismal as it looked, would send her off into a sleep sweeter than any vouchsafed to her for many months past—a sleep unbroken by any harsh voice calling her to to-morrow's drudgery and ill-usage. She had a fearful struggle with temptation; but some passages she recollect ed she had read from the New Testament, as it lay open on the knees of her aged protectress, enabled her to put the evil thought to flight, and she hurried across the bridge before the temptation had time to assail her again. On the other side of the river she found a tradesman's shop still open, and, faint and

hungry as she was, rushed into it, and burst into tears. The tradesman's wife, who was a good Samaritan, drew the poor girl's story from her, and at once offered her a night's lodging. The next morning she obtained some temporary employment, and went to it cheerfully, trusting that better days were about to dawn upon her.

The history of Clarissa from this time forth was that of any other young female thrown upon her own resources. She grew accustomed to her lot, and her hand perhaps lost for the time "the daintier sense of little employment." Her means of subsistence were precarious, and at the best everything depended upon her health; but as her life was passed among people who only lived from one week to another, she took her position as the common lot, and tried to be as hopeful as her neighbours were. This way of life, free as it is from any sickly heartburnings to rise or dread of falling much lower, has its pleasures, snatched at odd times in a hasty manner; but Clarissa never cared to take any share in them. The mystery hanging

over her birth—the solitary manner in which her early years were dreamed away, and the misery she endured after she lost her protectress, such as she was, had wrought its work upon her for the remainder of her life. Above all, the dark struggle with extreme temptation which she underwent, when she stood upon the bridge and thought that only one portal of refuge was left open to her, had stirred her nature from its inmost depths: thoughts and feelings stored in other bosoms for serious occasions and earnest contests with darker passions, were always rising to the surface of her mind, and chequering her intercourse with “this working-day world” by a train of deep and saddening reflection. She was apparently by constitution of a pensive temper, and a solitary companionless childhood had afforded joyous and lively feelings little room to develop themselves; but from this, or some other cause, a kind of quiet melancholy stole over her, and although cheerful in conversation, she seldom or never indulged in a smile.

She once confessed to me that she had been for years oppressed by a sense of the utter loneliness of her position, and that no one—not even a person at variance with every relation in the world—could enter entirely into her feelings: So strong was the yearning for something to gratify her natural craving for sympathy, that some time before we became acquainted she had wasted morning after morning in a fruitless ramble round the suburbs of London, in order to discover the old mansion in which she had been brought up, and only relinquished the search when she became convinced that it must long since have been pulled down. At another time she felt an uncontrollable desire to obtain possession of the portrait which had so strangely engrossed her childish affections; for she thought that to look upon the mute image, and interrogate it whether it was the representation of her own mother or not, would at least be some solace of her solitary musings: she had searched every picture-dealer's shop in London, but, of course, without success. So she was compelled to remain quiet—restrained

from any further effort to solve the mystery of her birth, by the dreary conviction of the hopelessness of her case ; and continuing her sojourn in a world, which for every one about her was a perfect network of ties acceptable or unwelcome, but to her a solitary desolate chamber, only echoing back the sound of her own voice : its stillness, unbroken by one kindly word from the lips of a friend or relative, and her heart uncheered by congenial fellowship of any kind.

## CHAPTER III.

MY recovery from this dangerous illness was exceedingly gradual, in consequence of my own imprudence, and had it not been for the unremitting care and watchfulness of my nurse, I should in all probability have sunk under the state of prostration it left behind. Clarissa's feelings had been driven in upon themselves by the circumstances of her early life, and I really believe that it was a luxury for her to attach herself to some one on whom she might lavish a womanly kindness and sympathy, however undeserving the object of her benevolence might be.

During the first week or two after I quitted my

bed, my mind was too much enfeebled to be enabled to take notice of the many gentle offices performed for me and the delicacies obtained for my nourishment by the devoted woman who was watching over my recovery ; but when I felt more interest in things passing around me, there was no concealing from myself the conviction that she was drawing upon some little store—probably one hoarded for her own season of sickness and necessity—in order to purchase them. The very suspicion that such a sacrifice was made by any one for my benefit preyed upon my spirits, and I put a few fretful questions to my kind nurse on the subject ; but she evaded them adroitly, telling me that I was not sufficiently recovered to talk about business, but that as soon as I regained my health nothing should be concealed from my knowledge.

I was, however, still a feeble invalid, when another person, who I am sure would have been the last man in the world to have intentionally hurt the feelings of any one just rising from a sick-bed, occasioned me a certain amount of vexation. This

was none other than Mr Gently, from whom I received a letter, cold and restrained in its language to the utmost degree. The handwriting of the body of it certainly was that of Mr Sadgrove, who perhaps was answerable for a certain amount of acerbity lurking in every sentence ; but the signature was that of my warm-hearted old friend after all, and he must have considered the person to whom the communication was addressed no longer deserving of his good opinion, ere he consented to put his name to anything so constrained and repelling.

Mr Gently professed to inform me, in the driest tone of professional courtesy possible, that he was making arrangements to concentrate his business engagements, and that it would no longer be convenient for him to retain my papers in his hands. He offered to transfer them to any gentleman who would call upon him for the purpose of receiving them ; but stated that he feared that the parties at Florence were out of my reach, and would never be brought to an account. He added, that

if he alluded to any professional charges standing against me in his books, he merely did so in order to convince me that no balance of cash likely to be placed to my account could be available to my use ; and of this he offered to satisfy me more in detail, if I thought fit to request him to forward his accounts. The letter, which, as I have before stated, was in the handwriting of Mr Sadgrove, concluded in the usual formal manner, and was then signed by Mr Gently.

Such was the communication which closed my friendship with the man who had once treated me as his own son, and welcomed me to the bosom of his family. I was altogether in the wrong, and deserved this treatment, or worse ; but yet at the time felt it to be cruel. I could not accuse Mr Gently of any deliberate want of feeling, because in all probability he was not aware of the dangerous illness from which I had just recovered ; and if Mr Sadgrove had obtained any knowledge of the precarious state I had been in, he would no doubt make light of it, or impute the illness to my own

vicious habits. After thinking the matter over a little, I took up my pen, and, mustering my ideas in the best manner my feebleness would allow me, wrote a cold but civil answer in reply, apologizing to Mr Gently for any trouble I might have occasioned him, and stating that as soon as circumstances enabled me to do so, I would defray any charges he might have against me ; entreating his indulgence in the meantime. And here all intercourse between us came to an end ; but seeing casually, a few weeks afterwards, that a sale of some property in London was to be carried out by Messrs Gently and Sadgrove, I arrived at the conclusion that the letter received by me was to all intents and purposes written by the latter gentleman, and that Mr Gently, had he consulted the dictates of his own heart, would have taken his farewell of an old friend in a kinder spirit, although it might be with grieved feelings, than he appeared to do under the inspiration of the acrid pen of his new partner.

I can scarcely tell what impulse induced me

to con over the list of marriages in the Times newspaper so diligently as I did after gleaning this last mentioned piece of information; but I was more vexed than surprised on learning that a wedding had come off in the family at Highgate. The advertisement was in the usual form, and drawn up with such precision and accuracy that I saw at a glance that it was the composition of the bridegroom. It informed the world, then, that on a certain day the Rev. Samuel Slocombe, M.A., vicar of Warminster, Wilts, assisted by the Rev. Barnabas Sadgrove, LL.B., incumbent of Crawler's Episcopal Chapel, Bath, united Paul Sadgrove, Esq. of Bedford Row, solicitor, to Fanny, second daughter of Robert Sloper Gently, Esq. of the same place, and of Highgate-rise.

Well, the pretty Fanny Gently had, after all, settled down as the wife of Mr Paul Sadgrove—aloes and honey were mixed together in the stopt vial called matrimony: but that is the case in but too many marriages. In all probability the match would have better suited her strong-minded sis-

ter, who could take her own part against Mr Sadgrove and every one else; but it was not my business to conjure up miseries in my own imagination for the benefit of my amiable young friend. Fanny had carried off a steady and careful husband, and could she once bend her mind to worship the graven statuette of himself enshrined in Mr Sadgrove's own heart, everything might go well with her. A good English wife expects some peculiarities in her lord and master, and puts up with them for the sake of a pretty villa, and the happiness of bringing up her children "genteelly." There was poor Mrs Foggerton: had it been her good luck to have found such a partner as the pragmatical little solicitor, her whole married life might have been one happy dream of stylish nurserymaids and lovely little children taken in and out of the perambulator, instead of the slatternly scamper it was her destiny to make of it arm-in-arm with her worthless husband. One fact was patent: Fanny had a very narrow escape of the refusal or acceptance of the

hand of one Maurice Elvington ; a man who, now he was compelled to look his own conduct in the face, felt ashamed of it, and was willing to confess that he had not treated the pretty little fairy—of whom he was at no time deserving—with due consideration.

After a time my thoughts left Fanny Gently, and fixed themselves on my old genial friend her mother. Did the match quite please Mrs Gently, or was she altogether satisfied with so precise and pragmatical a son-in-law ? And, since such trifles will influence people, did it not take Miss Mary Ann a full month ere she could put this and that together, and persuade the proudest mother in England to surrender her favourite child to “ Mr Paul ? ” I thought too of Amelia and the twelve tribes of Israel, and dreaded lest she should forthwith be taken through Milner’s Church History, or any other good book unfitted for a child’s capacity, by the Rev. Barnabas. Mr Simmers next claimed my charitable consideration. There had been a sort of quiet struggle between that clever, but by

no means cautious, young gentleman and his new master from the first day they encountered each other; and Mr Paul, now he had got the upper hand of him, would in all probability exact compensation for sundry jokes, of which his white neckcloth had been the subject-matter. Altogether, I sat in my sick-room with the newspaper in my hand, and half a dozen half-emptied bottles of medicine on the mantelpiece, working myself into an exceedingly bad temper, so that when Clarissa returned home from one of her charitable errands, I abused the invalid's privilege of being cross and unthankful, and spoke so unkindly to her that she burst into tears.

But as I am not by nature of an ungrateful temper—for before the world tried me so sorely, I was reckoned by my friends rather considerate than otherwise—I soon felt ashamed of my bad behaviour, and made my peace with Clarissa. I reflected on the deep obligations I was under to her, who had come forward at a time when I had not one friend in the world left, and nursed me,

all but a stranger to her, through a dangerous illness. She had sacrificed her time to preserve my life, and probably exhausted the savings of some years to procure me the comforts required during my slow recovery from the fever—had expended upon me, in fact, all the worldly estate of which she was the owner ; adding perhaps to the store what a woman places there the most charily—her own affections. Was there no return I could make her for all this ? None that most women would deem worthy of acceptance ; but yet there was something which, poor and abject as I found myself, I could yet offer in an acceptable form to Clarissa. I could take her out of a position in which, with all her virtue, she could not always hope to escape slander—and become her husband and protector.

After this thought once struck my mind, it never forsook it ; and as I consulted my heart merely—for what had two such pariahs to do with the considerations of worldly prudence—our arrangements were made before my recovery was quite perfect.

We left the mere pageant of the marriage-ceremony to the eager children of luxury, and went through it as something we wished well over. The morning we walked together down the sloppy street to the parish-church was a rainy one; they were repairing the interior of the edifice, and the nave was full of dusty boards, frayed ropes, and workmen's materials; two old wooden images, which stood in niches over the chancel, were covered up with dirty cloths; the clergyman who married us was half-stifled with an asthma; the glazing was out of one of the side windows, and as we stood before the rail of the altar, the rain came drizzling on to our faces; the clerk acted as groomsman, and the pew-opener was Clarissa's bridesmaid. Well, we were married and walked home again, and sat very quietly looking at the fire. Clarissa had obtained a husband and protector. All my old day-dreams were scattered to the winds ruthlessly, but I had won a self-sacrificing and affectionate wife; and having now fresh inducements of the

strongest kind to make up my quarrel with the world, I ought from that day forward to have turned over the leaf to a more creditable page of my history.

## CHAPTER IV.

ABOUT this time the British public was gratified with a recreation it never fails to enjoy, namely, a certain amount of scandal concerning some noble family which had contrived to get itself into hot water. The usual insinuations that a nobleman who had once formed part of her Majesty's administration made their appearance in the newspapers; and then followed a scuffle in the courts respecting overdue bills of exchange and contested mortgages. At last came the premonitory signs of a crash, the closing of the family-mansion,

and the revelation of the owner's name : this was no less a person than the poor, proud, invalid, Earl of Budesdale.

Much as I resented the abominable treatment I had received from his daughter, this terrible downfall of the venerable old peer—in which downfall, of course, my good-natured pupil must be involved—shocked me beyond measure. The event explained a great deal which I could not before comprehend : it accounted for the severe attack of illness which sent the Earl home to Chartley a mere wreck of himself, and for the self-reproachful tone he allowed to intrude into the two or three conversations we had together during my residence under his roof. It made clear to me the meaning of the natural tenacity with which the old man clung to the shadow of his territorial power whilst the substance was on the eve of eluding his grasp, and the obstinacy of mind that insisted upon the reiterated assertion of the principles in which he had been educated, at the

very moment his conscience must have told him full well that he had been practically a recreant from them. The mere political downfal of this creed of his own generation, had caused Lord Budesdale the most excruciating pain, and now the poor old peer was fated to furnish his exulting antagonists with their best and newest illustration of its shallowness. This was a hard fate: to linger on the stage after the departure of most of the actors of his day, and then be hooted off it as a man who had broken down in his part.

I felt sorry for Lord Budesdale, and a little chagrined on my own account. No one who has been seduced into image-worship relishes the downfal of his idol, even although he has long ceased to put faith in its divinity. The reflection that, during the very time I had been looking up to Lord Budesdale as a person almost too lofty to be approached by his own tenantry save by the intervention of the steward and bailiff, the Earl was keeping confidential appoint-

ments with every Levi and Lazarus in London, could not be flattering to the discernment of any man. Yet he was a noble old fellow after all — a splendid relic of a departed race of true aristocrats and gentlemen. As Kemble and Young, the great actors of his day, have left no successors who walk the stage like them, neither would Lord Budesdale's class of character descend to any younger rival when he had made his exit. But he was out of date and out of place : he had outlived his day. In the Georgian era, an embassy at Vienna or St Petersburg would have afforded him a dignified removal from the reproaches of all save his own conscience ; but there was nothing for him in these radical times save to look ruin in the face, and allow people to ring in his ears, day and night, that he had been guilty of that greatest of all possible crimes in his own eyes, the destruction of an ancient and noble family.

And how far was the Lady Venetia involved in the forfeited fortunes of her relations ? I had loved

her once, and that with a proud exalted feeling which gloated over her elevation above the heads of less fortunate sisters of her own sex. I had even recounted to myself her unamiable traits of selfish pride, scorn, and arrogance, which could elude the observation of no discerning eye however blinded it might be by love, as something which rendered her a prize more desirable to be wooed and won by a lover of spirit. And now the halo was torn from her brows, and I saw a mere unhappy woman, where my imagination had rejoiced in the portrait-ure of a goddess. She had treated me with the most refined cruelty, and yet, so far from exulting over her humiliation, I pitied her from the bottom of my heart, and detected myself making ten thousand excuses for her conduct: saying that she was the unconscious victim of the society wherein she moved, and which, having ruined her character for life, was now about to drive her into the nipping air of this actual world of sorrow. I beheld her in my mind's eye suing, perhaps in vain,

for the mere toleration of her own faded pretensions, in scenes where she had once lorded it over others ; or wandering over the Continent from Brussels to Baden, and from Baden to Florence, the sole companion of her aged and ruined parent—both of them now a byword and reproach wherever they made their appearance. On any supposition there was obloquy to be faced and vexation to be endured ; and I at least, who had swallowed my own share of the bitter draught, revelled in no vindictive pleasure when I saw the same chalice commended to the lips of the woman who had insulted me : on the contrary, I felt my heart bleed for her.

My anxiety concerning poor Lord Budesdale was soon set at rest—he died. There was just a sufficient pause in the family downfal to allow the new Earl, who had returned from Canada, to inter his predecessor with some attempt at a sumptuous funeral, within the mausoleum in Chartley Park ; immediately afterwards, that princely domain—

the very keystone of the Earl's pride, almost a portion of his own prejudiced yet noble nature—passed away to strangers. With Lord Budesdale's decease all need and possibility of concealment came to an end, and the gratified public learned the whole truth concerning this wonderful reverse of fortune.

The old Earl had succeeded to the long outstanding embarrassments of his father and grandfather at the time when he took possession of the family estates ; and he had added to these encumbrances by the indulgence of an obstinate resolution not to abate one jot of the pomp, pride, and circumstance he esteemed an heirloom of the lords of Chartley. He had been unable to content himself with the position of a territorial magnate in name merely, but had fulfilled what he considered the duties of his station in a munificent spirit. He had kept on old family tenants long after they had proved themselves to be both idle and worthless—all but refusing to pay their rents—and had started their sons in the world

at the very time he was mortgaging the farms on which they had been brought up. Although no friend to the education of the humbler classes, he had acknowledged the disagreeable fact of the schoolmaster being abroad, when that person knocked at his own door and built and endowed schools both at Budesdale and Chartley. But the great misfortune of his life had been his unreflecting fondness for his beautiful Countess. He had allowed that extravagant woman to run riot in the midst of a herd of architects, landscape gardeners, decorators, and upholsterers, in the great business of her life—the completion of the grand front of Chartley ; and a hundred thousand pounds had not defrayed the expenditure.

The rest of the tale was soon told. Lord Budesdale listened, in an evil hour for his descendants, to the suggestions of his own rigid notions of honour, and in order to discharge some pressing obligations, had persuaded Lord Brockhall, who was himself over head and ears in debt, to join him in

cutting off the entail of the family estates. After the Earl's death—and I rejoice that he did not live to see it—these came to the hammer, and a rich railway king lorded it over the valleys, where there was nothing now left to remind the tenants and peasantry of their kind old masters except the ruined donjon-keep at Chartley-Markham—just as Lord Budesdale had hinted to me in one of our conversations. Budesdale House was leased off to the ambassador of some great potentate or other, and as he gave grand receptions, the nobility flocked to them; no doubt, whilst they danced and chatted away, forgetting all about the Markhams.

The new Earl retired to the Continent; and Algernon, who probably took the family crash more philosophically than his prouder relations, was gazetted cornet in a regiment of light cavalry about to proceed to the East Indies. Lady Venetia disappeared from the Court Circular, and, in the opinion of those judicious people who make

it their guide in matters of history, was extinct and forgotten ; yet there was a heart beating quickly in some solitary hiding-place, and that a proud and breaking one.

## CHAPTER V.

I PASSED the first six or eight months succeeding my marriage in a state of felicity which it is now vain to regret. As time went on, I discovered that I had united myself to a companion not only of a very aimable disposition, but the owner of several good qualities, in which my own character had latterly become deficient. One could never by any possibility have lived with a person of a more even temper than Clarissa ; but although her disposition was rather grave, there was a fund of quiet cheerfulness at the bottom which did not easily give way under trifling provocation. I had, on the other hand, become altered for the better :

at least for the time being. Sickness has a chastening hand, and she had brought me to my senses. I reconsidered my past career more than once, reflecting that although the greater part of my errors could be traced to a misfortune for which I was not accountable, yet no one who allowed his feelings of wounded pride to get so completely the better of his self-command, could be altogether free from blame. So I determined to exasperate Fortune no longer, lest something worse should befall me, and to consider that I had now given pledges to make up my quarrel with the world, in the shape of my dear wife and any offspring with which she might bless me.

When my health was fully restored, I was not quite unsuccessful in obtaining the means of a mere subsistence. I renewed my acquaintance with Mr Simply; and the good man, who had himself married at nineteen with less than a five-pound note in his pocket, took great interest in my domestic arrangements. By means of his introduction, I was put upon a respectable publication

as an odd hand during the sitting of parliament; and although my engagement would come to a close when the House got up, the remuneration was so liberal that it not only paid present expenses, but would leave a small margin for the future. We took humble but healthy lodgings in one of the suburbs, and gathered together a few conveniences of life, and some elegances to which our scanty means entitled us. For the time being I grew reconciled to my lot, and came to the conclusion that all stations of life held some few grains of happiness in solution, provided one could only discover the proper chemical test for it.

But a restless temperament cannot lie long on any one bed, however tempting or lulling the couch may be, and, after eight or nine months, a change came over my feelings in spite of myself. Even prudential considerations began to chime in with the new arrangement of my thoughts, and encourage me to better my fortune if I could contrive to do so. I had married Clarissa from a feeling of gratitude—no more—but became exceed-

ingly attached to her after she became my wife ; indeed, at last turned into a devoted and tender husband. I knew from the first that she was amiable and affectionate, and that her precarious position in life had taught her prudence, and soon discovered higher qualities behind these more everyday virtues. Her position was lowly when I first became acquainted with her, but she had contrived to retain a great portion of the refinement which she derived from what I believe was her origin. She soon regained, therefore, in the quiet of her own home under the protection of a husband, an elegance of mind and deportment with which she had been endowed by nature, and was in all respects a suitable companion for a man who had once prized mere adventitious advantages at more perhaps than their real value. She had always been fond of reading, and had cultivated sound abilities beyond the usual extent—indeed, her knowledge on many practical subjects surpassed my own, and she possessed a deep quiet vein of reflection not frequently found in a female mind.

Altogether my choice had been a fortunate one; and as the vexations I had undergone had entirely removed any little self-conceit my slip off the ladder of life had left in my possession, I appreciated the prize I had drawn in what is after all a lottery, and grew daily more enamoured of my wife.

But the very ardour of the affection I at last conceived for her only rendered me the more desirous of regaining a certain amount of stability of position. Before marriage I had grown utterly reckless, as the reader well knows, and cared very little what my future lot might be:—It could never be my original position in life, and any station below it I despised. But now that I had another to think of, I found myself much less unwilling to make up my quarrel with Fortune on reasonable terms. I was well aware also that I might ere-long have a young family demanding my parental care and foresight, and already felt the instincts of a father pulling at the strings of my heart. Thoughts resembling these at first only intruded themselves

upon me at long intervals, and I had the power of dismissing the unwelcome visitors at my pleasure ; but after my mind was recalled to the Lady Venetia by her sad reverse of fortune, they became my daily companions, and haunted me without ceasing.

This imperious woman appears to have been, by some mysterious agency, a part of my destiny—a mocking spirit sent to goad me on to the edge of a precipice, when I would willingly have turned my feet into a safer although humbler path. My thoughts, I trust, dwelt chiefly upon her sad reverse of fortune—so akin to my own that I could not refuse her my sympathy ; but still the mere association of ideas recalled to recollection the painful scene in which she had dismissed me with words of contempt ringing in my ears. Clarissa was too good for me—in its utter negation of self her nature soared far above mine. I never ceased to acknowledge to myself that I was united to an affectionate and devoted woman, and one moreover possessed of no small amount of personal attractions and elegance of manners ; and yet whenever

the image of the Lady Venetia darted across my mind, I could not refrain from looking cynically at my beautiful wife, and acknowledging that I had indeed “married in my own station of life,” but not in my original one.

However, it affords me some consolation—at least quiets an uneasy conscience—to reflect that for a long time I carefully concealed my discontent from my wife, and might perhaps have reasoned myself out of it, had not a mere accident rendered me more unsettled than ever. I had accepted from a gentleman, to whom Simply had introduced me, the task of drawing up a memorial, with a ~~schedule~~ of accounts annexed, of an official—a colonial secretary I believe—who had been abruptly recalled from Australia, and was petitioning the home authorities for redress. The documents were voluminous; and whilst busied over them, I found my mind irresistibly drawn to the subject of emigration, which the papers in my hands put before me in the most flattering point of view. Often when tracing by means of the accounts, the pro-

gress of a colonist from a mere felon to the position of a wealthy landowner, have I asked myself why such advantages should be engrossed by the criminal, and kept out of the reach of a man like myself? I had learned to distrust my own conclusions, and therefore determined not to be hasty. I turned the subject over in my mind, and looked at it in every point of view, but yet could not disguise from myself that there was a possible career open for me in Australia, whilst in England every desirable avenue to more than a mere pittance appeared to be closed. There were temptations which might allure a person of my disposition, I knew—perfect change of scene, the rupture of old unpleasant associations, and the freshness of a new start in life—and I determined not to be imposed upon by any mere illusions. Yet, view the matter as I would, the conviction still forced itself upon me that it would be a desirable change if both myself and Clarissa sought a new home in the flourishing Southern Hemisphere, and lost sight of old mishaps in the active career of the colonist.

I cannot say that when I first broke the subject to my wife, she gave any encouragement to my schemes. Having for the first time in her life found a home, she had attached herself to it, and novelty and change of scene had no claims for a person of her temper ; which, very naturally, after the discouragements of the early part of her life, seldom looked upon the brilliant side of a question. Indeed, she was exceedingly averse to the idea of quitting her own country under any circumstances, and burst into tears when I merely hinted at it. At last, however, when she saw clearly that I had become perfectly unsettled, and was bent upon making the change, she gave into my views with a kind of melancholy resignation, full of forebodings ; which at the time assumed no tangible form, being, as they were, the mere shadows of sorrowful events slowly pacing towards us.

It is strange what obstacles Providence throws in a man's way when she is desirous of restraining him from some rash step leading to his ruin, and equally surprising how, at the same time, a blind

fatality urges him on to surmount all difficulties in order to work out his destiny. After I had with great importunity wrung from my wife a reluctant consent to my scheme, I was utterly baffled in my efforts to obtain the sum requisite to pay our passage out. I tried all the resources which are usually at the command of a man of some ability who possesses no capital, but they broke down under my feet, one after another, until I grew desperate, and imagined that the world was in a conspiracy against me. Clarissa more than once urged me to lay the scheme aside, and settle down contentedly, but remonstrance only rendered me more determined than ever. If you wish a person to carry out some headstrong act of wilfulness, do not coax him to keep in his present fit of obstinacy, for in all probability he will at once resume the temper of a reasonable being; rather throw obstacles in his way—cast around him a perfect mesh of adverse circumstances, and you may rest pretty well assured that he will break through them.

I have mentioned in the early chapters of my

narrative, an old family servant through whom I gained some of my information respecting my father's aunt, Mrs Martha Elvington, female Jacobin, citizen of the world, and surviving depositary of the political opinions of Mr Godwin. As the reader may perhaps recollect, this person's husband had realized a small independence, and they now lived retired in the same neighbourhood in which we had taken our apartments. I had always kept up my acquaintance with this Mrs Saunders, and was a great favourite with her. When I first acquainted her with my marriage with Clarissa, the good woman was, as any other family-servant would have been, much shocked at an Elvington uniting himself to any one below the grade of a peeress; but she got over the disappointment in time, and became very much attached to my wife.

Mrs Saunders was in the habit of dropping in upon us occasionally in a respectful kind of manner, at which the proudest young master could not take umbrage, and became a kind of confidential person with Clarissa, who set the highest

value upon her good sense and attachment to us. When I was first seized with this mania to emigrate, I had let the good woman into my confidence, and entreated her to remove the scruples of my wife ; and she did her best, out of the respectful deference with which she always received any suggestion of mine. In her heart, however, she thought the scheme a wild one, and told me so more than once. On finding my efforts to obtain the necessary sum for our passage out completely baffled, I expressed my vexation to my old friend, and instantly received an offer from her, which I rejected in such a peremptory manner that she never presumed to repeat it. At last, on my recurring to the subject, she mentioned the name of Mrs Elvington, to whom, she said, she still wrote at distant intervals, and urged me to apply to her for the loan at least of the sum required. I half went out of my mind at the mere suggestion of such a step—left the worthy woman's house in a worse temper than I entered it, and there the matter, as I thought, ended.

Just a fortnight, however, after I rejected this suggestion from Mrs Saunders, and at a time when I was literally boiling over with vexation, a letter reached me by the post from the north of England. It was a mere envelope enclosing bank notes to the value of one hundred and fifty pounds—not one line of writing accompanied the gift. I was not in the dark for an instant as to who was my anonymous benefactor, and ran round to Mrs Saunders with the notes in my hand, reproaching her with her betrayal of confidence in letting Mrs Elvington into the secret of my necessities against my wish. She was frightened at my violence, and out of mere terror confessed to me that my whimsical relation had for years exacted from her a perfect diary of my career in life, as well as that of my father, and owned that she had given the old lady some hint of my desire to emigrate, and want of success in obtaining the resources necessary to enable me to pay my passage out. As to the remittance itself, she urged upon me the reasonableness of accepting it, even as a gift, from my nearest

relation in England ; but stated that if I was really too proud to be under an obligation to any one, she (Mrs Saunders) would cheerfully become my banker when more prosperous days dawned upon me, and return the money to Mrs Elvington.

I must confess that, on turning the matter over in my mind, I took the same view of the case that Mrs Saunders did, and saw no reason why I should not accept a temporary loan from a relation whom I had never offended in the course of my life. Clarissa, whose spirit was high, urged me to return the notes instantly, but at last allowed her scruples to be overcome. So, to cut a long story short, I treated the money as my own, and began setting about the needful arrangements with an energy which would in all probability have made my fortune in my native country.

## CHAPTER VI.

AT that time—I am writing of some ten or twelve years since—Englishmen were little in the habit of running away from their native country under the influence of a feverish longing for change, or a desire to better a condition not intolerable at home. Every one who could keep body and soul together stayed by his own fireside, and abandoned the field of the colonies to the unsuccessful, the vicious, the fraudulent—indeed, all who found every chance of a career in their own country closed against them. When I began, after having obtained the necessary funds, to inquire about the means of pro-

curing a passage to Sydney—for that was the colony to which I had determined to bend my steps—I was puzzled by discovering that there was no wonderful supply of first-class ships on the berth, nor was there likely to be.

I set about my search in a business-like manner, made inquiries of all the respectable agents in the metropolis, and went down day after day to the London and East India Docks, to go over the vessels of which I had taken the particulars, but nevertheless could not find a single one which satisfied my rather fastidious requirements. The Australian voyage was not just then in any great repute with the general run of shipowners. It was a long and uncertain one—freights were not always obtained without difficulty; and if there happened to be no return-cargo from the colonies, ships were compelled to go round to Bombay or China, and take their chance of loading at one or other of these ports. Since also passengers were very seldom to be assured on the outward voyage, most vessels took convicts—a charge which the

better sort of captains would not be burdened with if they could help it.

The ships which I did find on the list then by no means offered tempting accommodation to a passenger about to be accompanied by his wife. Among other defective arrangements, I found that few or none of them, unless they were to take out convicts, carried a surgeon on board. Now this was a sine quâ non with me, for I was well aware that Clarissa's confinement must take place several weeks ere we reached Sydney: I had offered, indeed, to postpone our voyage for five or six weeks on that very account; but my wife, who saw our money melting away week after week, set her face against any suggestion of the kind. She was by no means nervous, and although she did not conceal from me that the prospect of a confinement on board ship was an unpleasant one, thought that as I was determined to leave England, we had better do so before we were prevented by the exhaustion of our resources. Of course she looked upon Mrs Elvington's loan as devoted to this especial pur-

pose, and was determined not to allow me to spend one farthing of it, except in the prosecution of our enterprise. Still she could not refrain from cherishing some lingering hope that the unexpected difficulties I encountered in my endeavours to procure a suitable passage out, would disgust me with what she considered my headstrong scheme; and one evening, when I gave her to understand that I was more than usually out of heart, she urged me to reconsider the matter altogether.

“ My dear Maurice,” said Clarissa, “ you meet with nothing but disappointment in your endeavours to carry out this serious scheme of yours—I mean our removal to another part of the world. Had we not better look upon it as a warning, and pause ere we take a step we can never retrace? Postpone our departure for the present at least, if not altogether, and allow me to return these notes, which we have neither of us yet touched, to Mrs Saunders; who, no doubt, is in the confidence of the party who lent them.”

“ I would willingly comply with your wishes,

my dearest Clarissa," was my answer (certainly not a true one), "but with the uncertain and precarious prospect before us in this country, it is our duty to persevere and seek another. I care very little what the future has in store for myself: my great downfal in life has rendered me utterly careless as to how I may live or where I may die—it is all one to me. But for your sake, and out of regard to the children who will ere long be asking us to assure them some certain provision until they are able to maintain themselves, it is our duty to seek a wider field for any energies I possess, than this over-peopled country can ever afford me."

Now my wife, who was indeed the very genius of good sense, was not deluded by hearing me talk in this strain. But she was well aware that I had allured myself into the pleasant belief that, whilst in reality indulging a restless disposition, I was making a great sacrifice of my own reluctance to leave England, for the sake of her and the infant who would soon call me father. So,

knowing that argument with me on this point would be useless, she changed the subject.

“I sometimes think, my dear husband,” she went on to say, “that although you are no doubt influenced by a laudable desire to provide for your wife and any family you may have by her, a dislike for your own country—an eagerness to get out of it, to some extent, urges you on. Are you quite certain that a desire no longer to meet faces which once knew you in the days of your prosperity, and now bring bitter recollections to your mind, is not the principal inducement to seek a thorough change of scene? Above all, are you really so sanguine of succeeding in this new country as you would fain persuade yourself you are? You ought to be quite assured on that point before you take a step you cannot retrace.”

“Oh! as for that, Clarissa,” I answered, speaking as if quite certain on a subject on which I really had some doubts, “you are annoying yourself without reason. A man who endeavours to realize a competence in the colonies meets with

none of the insuperable obstacles he encounters in an old country. As it is, I have never altogether allowed my energies to flag, even in the close and crowded field of London; and in a new country, with everything around one to put one into heart, I am sure that I shall be able to call them into better play than ever. I feel a perfect reliance upon myself, I assure you."

"I trust that you do, Maurice," replied my dear wife, with a sigh. "It is your duty to yourself not to allow a mere longing for change to delude you. If impediments to success exist in this country, they are not without some accompanying advantages. An unsuccessful man can console himself with the reflection that he has not had a fair chance this time, and may wait patiently for another. But I am told that in a colony a great number of emigrants all commence life again with the same or equal advantages, and that one has the mortification of seeing many—even persons who go out in the same ship—get the start of him in the world. Now, what I fear is, that if you do not succeed

very wonderfully at first, you will grow discontented with your own abilities, and perhaps cease to exert yourself altogether."

"Well, Clarissa," I said, pretending to laugh off the effect of her reasoning (for I felt that she understood my character much better than I did myself), "the best of arguments are worth nothing when they come too late. You see how we have been driven on by a kind of fatality to take this resolution—no doubt the best thing for us—and that we are unable now to recall our consent to it. I am not certain that I can regain the engagements I have given up: I really do not believe that I can. Your own arrangements have been made, and if we return this money to Mrs Elvington, as we should be bound in honour to do, I have not another five-pound note left in the world. There is no real cause of apprehension or room for regret. At all events they come too late, and it is now our manifest duty to leave England cheerfully and hopefully, and look forward to a happy result from

this terrible experiment. And now let us talk about something else."

Thus did my guardian angel, taking the form and voice of an exemplary wife, give me one final warning. I turned a deaf ear to it—the good angel spread his wings and departed. The very day that followed the morning on which this little conversation took place between us, I lighted upon a vessel suitable to my views in every respect. She was lying at Blackwall, and bore the name of the Jessalore—I believe after some place in the East Indies. In her palmy days she had been known as a fine teak-built East Indiaman, which carried half the wives and children of the covenanted servants of the Company across the ocean, but had been sold off when the trade had been thrown open owing to the alteration in the charter. She was a handsome vessel still, of the old orthodox fashion, with a square stern, and built like a duck in the forecastle; and no doubt one of our modern clippers would have outsailed her in five minutes, but she was wind and weather tight, with a

large roomy poop, divided, like most ships of her class, into several distinct sets of cabins. Some of these were set apart for the captain and ship's officers, and the remainder, with the exception of two cabins, had been already taken by Lieut.-col. Crowler, the recently appointed Commander of the Forces in New South Wales, who was to be accompanied by his lady and their servants. However, the two disengaged suited me very well, as one of them, although rather small, was airy, and having a stern window, would be a desirable place for Clarissa's confinement.

The Jessalore bore a good character in all respects, and was about the only ship on the berth in those days which could be expected to make the passage in a handsome fashion. She was the property of wealthy owners, carried a surgeon, and had been generally selected by governors, chief-justices, and other functionaries, as the vessel to convey them out to the colony. Altogether, I considered myself fortunate in finding a berth vacant in the ship, and immediately secured it. As she was to

sail in about six weeks from the day I first went over her, I soon became engrossed by the not altogether disagreeable task of purchasing my furniture and outfit, so that I dipt deeply every day into Mrs Elvington's loan or gift of a hundred and fifty pounds.

I was of course compelled to run down to Blackwall on many occasions, and cannot assert that I contracted, whilst occupied on board the ship, any great love for her crew, or the fellow-passengers in whose society I was to make the voyage. I saw very little of the captain, but was not prepossessed in his favour when I did happen to get a glimpse of that important person. He was an abrupt rough man, with by no means a kind manner of handling his sailors ; who indeed seemed to require a taught hand kept over them, for they were rather an unruly set of sea-dogs. The surgeon was a gentlemanly man in his manners certainly, but seemed to labour under a continual depression of spirits, occasioned, as I learned afterwards, by the misfortunes of his past life. He had lost his wife

about six months before the commencement of our voyage, and having been compelled by some mishap or other to relinquish his practice in his native town in Scotland, had accepted a free passage to Sydney, where he intended to start in the world again.

When beginning to send my effects down to the docks, I had several little contests with the ship's steward and a negro servant belonging to Colonel Crowler, who were getting the poop in order for the great man amongst us. The steward, who was perhaps accessible to a little bribery, was not over civil or obliging to any one except the colonel; who, I soon discovered, was making a great stir, and endeavouring to carry things with a high hand, in order to secure his own comforts, without any regard to the convenience of his fellow-passengers. The black fellow, like most of his class, presumed upon his master's importance; and conceiving, or pretending to conceive, a great disrespect for our humble arrangements, tried to compel me to alter them in favour of his master

on more than one occasion. Altogether, when the time came for the Jessalore to leave the docks, she was in such a state of confusion and discomfort that I felt reluctant to take my wife on board in the midst of it; and having learned from the negro that Colonel Crowler and his lady had no intention of encountering the tumble down the Channel, but intended to wait for the ship at Plymouth and go on board in the Sound, I determined to adopt this sensible arrangement, although at some additional cost to myself. I allowed the ship, therefore, to drop down the river without us, and determined to follow her to Plymouth in the course of a couple of days.

## CHAPTER VII.

THE time arrived at last for us to bid farewell to our native country, and I was certainly surprised on discovering that I felt that lingering regret which overcomes most people when they take their last look of that corner of the world which has stood in something like the relation of a parent to them. However, I consoled myself with the reflection that England had only been a step-mother to Maurice Elvington, after all ; and for the sake of Clarissa, who accompanied me with an air of resignation but no feelings of pleasure or hopefulness, assumed a composure I did not in reality

feel. I would fain have retraced the step I had taken ; but it was now too late.

On reaching Plymouth, we found that the *Jessalore*, which had had the wind in her favour during her run down the Channel, was already anchored in the Sound ; and the first person whom we ran against on shore was Mr Morrison, the ship's surgeon. He advised us to be on board the first thing the next morning, remarking that our captain, who talked of weighing anchor at the turn of the tide, was just the man to leave an unpunctual passenger to his fate. Our fellow-passengers also were already on board—indeed, were giving themselves great airs, Mr Morrison said. The party consisted, he told us, of Colonel Crowler, an infirm ill-tempered old veteran in very bad health, together with his wife, a lady of quality, to whom he had recently been married ; an Ayah or Indian female-servant, and the black fellow whom I had so frequently met down at the docks. The surgeon said, that as he intended to establish himself, if possible, as a medical man at Sydney, it would

not be advisable for him to offend so influential a person as the future Commander of the Forces in New South Wales if he could possibly avoid it ; but he advised me, as a friend, to stand quietly up for my own rights as soon as we came into contact, for he foresaw that I should have an uncomfortable voyage unless I knew how to take my own part.

On going on board the next morning I found the ship in a disorderly state ; indeed this is always the case until the crew lose sight of land. I fought my way aft, with Clarissa on my arm, with some difficulty ; and when I reached the cuddy door, who should I find standing before it, in a terrible fit of excitement, but my old attached friend Mrs Saunders—very red in the face, and with a large basket at her feet. I was pleased to see the good woman, who had taken a troublesome journey out of attachment to myself and Clarissa ; but, although she never was a very meek person, I could not for the world understand what had put her into such a furious passion.

“ Why, Mrs Saunders,” said I, “ this is an un-

expected pleasure: I am delighted to see you once more and bid you good-bye before we are off on our long voyage. But why put yourself to all this expense and trouble? I am vexed that you have done so."

"La, Mr Elvington!" answered the good woman; "Sir, don't mention it. I knowed that you and your good lady was unused to these matters, and thought I'd come and see all things right and tidy for you. I hope you find yourself quite well, Mrs Elvington—poor cretur! it's a deal of sea you have before you, and them sailyors is a reglar set of bad uns, I can see. It's a blessed thing now I comed down here at all," said Mrs Saunders, proudly, "although to be bullied at my time of life by heatherns, and swared at by rascally ships' stewards, isn't what I've been accustomated to these many years. I lived fourteen year with your grandfather, Mr Elvington, and he never swared at me in his life—no, nor Saunders neither—and yet I've lived to be swared at by that rascally woolly-headed black vagabond."

"I don't think," I replied, "that the colour of the fellow's skin makes much difference. But what's the matter?"

"Matter indeed!" cried Mrs Saunders, appealing to Clarissa. "Would you like, ma'm, to have your bedroom pulled over your ears, and the furniter chucked out of the winders into the hocean, and a filthy nigger put into it?—What's the matter?—Why, they've only took one of your bed-rooms and gived it to Black Cuffy, that's all. But here's the rascal who's been and done it. Come here, you vagabond, and tell Mr Elvington the same fine story you've been a-telling of to me, if you dare."

At this moment the steward, who perhaps had been listening to our conversation, made his appearance at the door of the cuddy; but it was some minutes before he would come forward, although I asked him to do so and Mrs Saunders dared him to join us. I saw by his manner that he was determined to face out his impertinent conduct (for which, perhaps, he had taken a bribe), and that I

should have trouble with the fellow. He was very insolent at first, but on discovering that he had met with his match, and that I threatened an appeal to the captain unless the poop cabin—the one he had taken from me and given to the black servant—were restored, began to lower his tone. He even thought fit to make a few ungracious excuses, and spin a long yarn about Colonel Crowler's shifting his bedroom from the larboard to the starboard side of the ship, and requiring to have his servant at hand in case he should be seized with illness during the night. But he was not allowed to pursue his narrative without interruption from Mrs Saunders, who seemed to be aware that her tongue had got the upper hand of him, and called him a "willian," a "trumpery jackanapes," and other polite designations, which readily come to the tongue of an elderly female when a little excited.

Just as the steward, however, felt that he was rather getting the worst of it, the black fellow, who had been making himself a grand person in the fore-part of the ship, came aft, and his confederate, who

was glad to take the woman's tongue off himself, appealed to him, and asked him whether the cabin allotted to us was not far preferable to the one of which we had been deprived ; when the fellow, after rolling his eyes about horribly, protested that it was, and that he had almost shed tears on his master ordering him to remove his bed to the other side of the ship.

“ What you say, my fine fellow,” I remarked, when he had ended his story, “ may or may not be true—about that I do not concern myself. All I have to observe in reply is, that the cabin is mine, and I intend to occupy it. You will not get many good nights’ rest if you attempt to sleep in it.”

“ Here’s a cussed row,” said the negro, pretending to look disgusted ; “ here’s a cussed row—dis cabbin good for me—dat alle same to you—gentle-mans muss be obliged.”

“ Not at my expense, I assure you,” I answered ; “ so take your bed out of the berth and bring my furniture back this very minute.”

"All berry fine," said the man, "but can't be done nohow. Steward gib me dis cabbin—ole man speak to steward—steward frightened—all frightened of ole man, he so cussed curis."

"He may be curious or not," was my reply; "but I have the misfortune to be curious too, and I happen to be curious about having this cabin because I have paid for it. I shall not take the trouble to tell you so many times more."

"High!" said the fellow, looking very saucy; "high! keep quiet—ole man hear you, and he storm like de berry debble. He gentlemans, I tell you—he de berry debble when he be up."

"He may be what he pleases," said I, raising my voice to a high pitch; for just then I saw the outline of a thin stooping figure, accompanied by a lady and a female wearing a white muslin veil over her head—the Ayah, I supposed—coming in to the cuddy; "your master may be what he pleases, but you have my permission to tell him—and I speak loudly that he may hear me say it if he pleases—that this conduct is unbecoming of a gentleman—

that is, if he has really had anything to do with the matter. We are passengers like himself—we have to make a long voyage in each other's company, and I cannot allow Colonel Crowler, or any one else, to alter my arrangements without my permission in this arbitrary fashion. However, to cut the matter short, I order you to go about your business, and shall stand over the steward while he throws your bedding out of the cabin window. Go about your business."

The fellow, plucking up spirit—for he had caught sight of his master—replied with an oath.

"Take that for your insolence," said I, striking him slightly over the shoulders with a broken spar that happened to lay handy: "since your master has not taught you how to behave to other gentlemen, I will take your education out of his hands."

On receiving this slight castigation, the fellow, who, nevertheless, was evidently cowed, began to swear horribly, in order to attract his master's attention. Mrs Saunders, who had grown weary of

standing a silent listener so long, joined her voice to his, making many allusions to the social status of his race in America, and expressing, in an abstract manner, her disgust at all "niggers," male and female. The steward seized the opportunity of expending on an elderly female the insolence he did not think it quite safe to vent upon me, and altogether the three raised such a horrible din, that Clarissa, who was still leaning on my arm, turned very pale and appeared frightened. At last, Colonel Crowler, who probably did not reckon his own dignity very much enhanced by his servant receiving a beating, judged it best to emerge from the cabin and see whether he could not terrify me into submission by the awful presence of the Commander of the Forces.

As the colonel came upon deck, he appeared to be a tall meagre man of about sixty-five years of age, but so worn by sickness and hard service, that in his face, which was a very long and yellow one, he looked six or eight years older. He stooped dreadfully, and was compelled to pause every now

and then in his walk through a severe fit of coughing, for he suffered apparently from an asthma. I thought that this man was in a strange state of health to undertake a voyage half round the globe, and much better fitted for Chelsea Hospital than to command any forces, great or small, in New South Wales.

“ Ugh, ugh ! ” ejaculated this pleasant-looking person, as he came forward, half-choked with passion or want of breath, “ what the devil, sir, means this ? Cannot Lady Crowler and myself have one minute’s quiet on board—ugh—ugh—the ship ? I will not put up with it. Where is the chief officer ? ”

The steward grumbled out a few words—I believe that the captain and mate were on shore—and for the cause of the riot appealed to the black gentleman, who, of course, told his own story ; not, however, without sundry savage interruptions from his ill-tempered master, who threatened to strip him of his livery on the spot, and send him on shore to beg his way up to London. When his

servant's story came to an end, the colonel turned round to me with a very commanding air, evidently with an intention of sending such an insignificant person about his business as quickly as one of his old sergeants or corporals.

“ Well, sir,” said Colonel Crowler, “ you see how the matter stands—ugh, ugh. We have taken our berth in this ship without being aware that any other passengers were to be allowed—ugh, ugh. It is not to be expected that an officer who has served his Majesty five and forty years, and is on his way to Australia in order to fill a responsible post—ugh, ugh—can be incommoded or deprived of comforts necessary for his health by those who are permitted to share the poop with him. You assure me that you have really—ugh, ugh, ugh—taken these cabins—I must speak to the captain about that—and so we may perhaps accommodate you; but it is absolutely necessary that my servant should sleep near me, in case I should be seized with—ugh, ugh—my old complaint during the night. The steward pledges

himself that the cabin allotted to you shall suit you quite as well as the one in dispute—ugh, ugh—and yet you behave in this unreasonable manner, and endeavour to ruin the comfort of your fellow-passengers."

It was all very fine for a Lieutenant-colonel and Commander of the Forces to take away another person's berth in a ship, and then call him unreasonable for not submitting to the imposition quietly; but such logic had no weight with the party really aggrieved. Just then the captain came on board, and hearing from one of the sailors that the passengers were quarrelling about their arrangements, came aft forthwith. I appealed to him as soon as he joined us, protesting that unless the cabin in dispute was immediately restored to me, I would go on shore, return to London, and sue the owners for damages; and as this threat made some impression on the bystanders, I repeated it.

When I knew more of our captain, I soon discovered that a passenger had mistaken the person

who would do him justice, if he appealed to him concerning any grievance whilst on the voyage; but as the ship had not left port, her lord paramount knew that his irresponsible reign had yet to begin. Colonel Crowler also had already made himself troublesome, and although the man stood rather in awe of such a great person, he thought the present was a safe opportunity of bringing the old gentleman into order a little. So he behaved very well in the affair—made the steward tell him the truth without prevarication, and sent the rascal off with a severe reprimand, when he discovered that he had presumed to change the berths on his own responsibility. He then brought the ship's papers out of the cuddy, and convinced Colonel Crowler of what he probably knew well enough before, that the owners had let the two cabins to us, and that they were not included in his own arrangements. In the sequel, the old colonel, although he did not exactly give an express permission for his servant to shift his bedding to his berth again, rejoined his lady and the Ayah in a very bad tem-

per ; and the captain then turned the man-servant's chattels out of the cabin, and gave me possession of it.

By this time the sailors were weighing the anchor, and I requested Mrs Saunders to go on shore. The faithful attached creature turned rather restive, but saw the necessity of complying with my request, although she did so with a very disconsolate air. She kissed Clarissa fervently several times, all the while showering blessings on my own head ; and so she stood crying and taking each of us in turn by the hand, until the men in the boat alongside called out that they would not wait for her another five minutes. When she at last tore herself away, she took care to leave her basket behind her, and we afterwards discovered that it was stored full of numberless little comforts and conveniences.

“Good-bye, Mrs Elvington,” cried Mrs Saunders, as she turned away with a final burst of tears—“ God bless you. Good-bye, Mr Elvington.”

At the name of Elvington, the Colonel's lady,

who was just entering the cabin, turned her head —she drew back instantly, so that I only glanced at her features for a moment ; but I at once recognised in her the Lady Venetia Markham.

## CHAPTER VIII.

THIS unexpected rencontre damped any feeling of pleasure with which I had looked forward to our voyage at the commencement. I kept the secret from my wife, and endeavoured to hide even from myself the forebodings which hung like a dark cloud over my spirits, but was unable to shake off the feeling of depression. A mysterious agency had apparently assumed the control over my destiny, and was steering it to no safe haven. It was partly to forget the woman who had wounded my self-love so cruelly that I was flying from my native country, and now we were brought together in the very same ship. Some serious calamity

was surely in store for us both, else we should never have encountered again in this strange manner, after we had lost sight of each other, as we thought, for ever.

However, after we left the breakwater behind us, I was roused from these gloomy meditations by the commencement of the usual troubles of a sea-voyage. Clarissa, who had never been on the water before, suffered severely from sickness, and was confined to her berth for a week. I was a good sailor myself, and soon got on deck again, when I found that we were running past the Eddystone with a stiff breeze, which promised us a tumble in the Bay of Biscay. I was not sorry to learn that, like my wife, my fellow-passengers were confined to their cabins; with the exception of the man-servant, who had been several voyages with the colonel before. The black fellow, seeing me standing alone in the waist of the ship, came up with a penitent air, and asked my pardon for his bad behaviour. The steward also sneaked out of the galley, where he had been talking to the

cook, and made something like an apology on his own account. As I could not part company with the two rascals for the next four or six months, I suffered myself to be mollified, and was satisfied with having carried my point respecting the cabin.

A long voyage, even at the present day, is full of discomfort. Your cabin is at the best but a poor makeshift for the Englishman's castle on shore, and the slatternly splendour of the captain's table has very little of the relish of a humbler but cleaner meal. One day you are shifted about by all kinds of contrary winds, and on the next find yourself scudding before a squall, which sends the sea over the forecastle, and demolishes every breakable article in your own possession, besides reducing the handsome table-service in the steward's pantry to a few plates and three or four broken dishes. Certainly, in these days of middle-class emigration, you may generally rely upon the company of a gentlemanly captain and well-disciplined crew ; but at the period when I first crossed the

Equator, these agreeable adjuncts to the voyage were rather desired than expected by any one who took the Australian passage.

The lord paramount of the Jessalore was evidently a good and experienced sailor, and, when sober, could keep both ship and crew in order ; but it was impossible for me to doubt the fact that I had committed both our lives to the charge of a person who at times drank himself out of his senses. When in a state of half-intoxication, the captain was in the habit of giving all kinds of contradictory orders, and quarrelled dreadfully with the first mate, whose business it was to work the ship. This officer was a quiet gentlemanly man and able seaman, but rather deficient in nerve, and had not the habit of roaring about deck and making himself of importance enough with the crew ; who were frequently discontented and downhearted, as sailors always are, unless a tight hand is kept over them. Mr Morrison, the surgeon, was about the most companionable person on board, and I felt happy in knowing that the fate of Clarissa and

her infant was in such kind and skilful hands. He felt as uneasy at the character and conduct of our captain as I could possibly do, and wished himself well out of the Jessalore, landing his goods and chattels in Sydney Cove, in order to look out for a conspicuous door in George Street to which he might affix his professional blue lamp and brass plate.

One morning as I was lounging in the fore-part of the ship, and watching through my glass the white villas and shrubberies of the Spanish coast—for we were now running down the Bay of Biscay—I was joined by Colonel Crowler's black gentleman. The negro, like most of his race, was a good-tempered fellow at the bottom, and a great gossip. As I found that the man had crossed the Equator before, and could give me some valuable information, I tolerated his company, and allowed him to chatter on; which he did on every imaginable topic, from his own country and parentage to the birth of his master the colonel, for whom at the bottom he entertained a profound

respect. Colonel Crowler, who was then doing garrison-duty in Barbadoes, had bought him when a mere lad, and had trained him up in terror of his very look ; although in other respects he had used him well—indeed, made him his right-hand man and factotum.

Colonel Crowler, according to the account his servant gave me of him, was a gallant old officer whose bravery and long service had been completely overlooked because he had no political interest. He had gone through the whole of the Peninsular war, exposing himself freely to every hazard and casualty—led a “ forlorn hope ” at the successful storming of St Sebastian, where he received a shot through the body within half an inch of the lungs, and was left for dead in the ditch. He recovered, however, although very slowly, and, before he had fully regained his strength, was drafted off to New Orleans, where an attack of yellow-fever brought him again to the brink of the grave. This time he was invalided home, and in very bad case. The wound he re-

ceived at St Sebastian caused a constant irritation of the lungs, which ended in a kind of asthma, whilst the fever left behind it the agreeable legacy of a liver complaint; and yet this excellent and fearless officer was still a neglected subaltern at the very time that one noble noodle after another was put at the head of his regiment.

His unlucky absence in America prevented the colonel from sharing in the honour of the great battle of Waterloo—a loss of professional distinction any allusion to which almost drove the old veteran out of his senses; and the long peace put him, with many other gallant men, upon half-pay. One would have imagined that by this time he had seen enough of bloodshed and hard service to last the greatest glutton for fighting for the rest of his days, and that the unmerited neglect with which his services were treated would have disgusted him altogether. The old soldier, however, was fond of his profession, and could not bear to grumble away his life in inactivity. He had also the misfortune to be a younger son and on bad terms with his elder

brother—as cross-grained a person as himself—and had no private fortune wherewith to eke out his slender half-pay; so he laid regular siege to the Horse Guards, soliciting active service on any terms, and endeavouring to wear the authorities out by sheer pertinacity. His want of interest, however, and the bad repute of his insubordinate temper—for he had only been kept out of several serious scrapes owing to his high character for daring, and other soldierly qualities—gave the people at Whitehall an opportunity of putting a black mark against his name, and they did not for several years pay the slightest real attention to his importunities.

At last the powers of endurance even of the Secretary of a Commander in Chief became exhausted, and in order to avoid answering a few hundred more applications, he sent his troublesome correspondent to do garrison-duty in the West Indies, merely to get him out of the way. Perhaps he thought that this service would be the old veteran's last, and that he would never turn up in England

again. He deceived himself egregiously, for Captain Crowler, after spending several years very pleasantly in Barbadoes, growling at inaction, and challenging every one who inquired civilly what caused him to be so dreadfully out of temper just to exchange a shot with him at the back of the barracks—came home and paid his military patrons another visit. By this time they had arrived at the conclusion that their tormentor bore a charmed life, and had better be got rid of again with all convenient speed ; so they drafted him off to the East Indies, to his own great gratification—for he had heard a rumour that we were about to have a brush with the golden-footed monarch of Ava.

The hopes of the gallant old soldier were not disappointed: on reaching Calcutta he was immediately marched off to take part in the first Burmese war. During this rather disastrous campaign, he displayed his usual gallantry, and again bore a charmed life. Colonels and captains were swept from his side, or perished miserably of

jungle-fever, but he remained unscathed, almost indignant at not bringing away a scratch to convince people at home that he had been under fire. In due time peace was wrested from our obstinate antagonist, and the old soldier was marched back to Calcutta, where he again did garrison-duty for some years. He set up a kind of domestic establishment there, placing the Ayah—who now accompanied him on his passage out to Sydney—in rather an ambiguous position at the head of it. The negro spoke very disrespectfully of his fellow-servant: he said she was proud and ill-tempered, and tyrannized over her master—who was probably aware that she had claims upon him which his recent marriage did not allow him to satisfy.

Major Crowler—for he had at last climbed up that step in his profession—was compelled to run away from Calcutta by the thorough break-up of his health. Although worn to a shadow by the fatigues he had undergone and the effects of the climate, he would have died at his post rather

than be thought capable of deserting it; but he was enabled just then to make an excuse to himself for saving his own life by a return to England. His elder brother, who had never condescended to marry, died suddenly, and left him heir to large estates in Dorsetshire. On his receiving this accession to his fortune, the people at home thought fit to gazette him Lieutenant-colonel; expecting, no doubt, that, as he was sixty years of age, and had spent forty-three of these in the service of his country, he would forthwith sell out and retire. But the human heart has this unlucky propensity: it attaches itself early in life to some object of ambition, at that time rational enough, and perseveres in chasing the shadow long after it has become a mere illusion of no value or significance. Colonel Crowler had from his boyhood set his heart upon obtaining the Companionship of the Bath; and as it had never been accorded to him, took the disappointment to heart much more seriously than such a brave man ought to have done; so he lived on sulkily and disconsolately in a great rambling

country-mansion, railing at the world outside him, confining himself to the society of his two satellites, and occasionally worrying the Horse Guards to give him employment. Nay, he even threatened to turn chartist, or contest the county in the radical interest, unless they treated his applications with some real respect. The people at Whitehall, however, turned a deaf ear even to this terrible threat, although they were frightened at it; for just then they were ordered by the great Whig nobleman, his papa, to manufacture Lord Loiter into a full General before the anticipated change took place in the ministry.

Where and in what manner his master first met the Lady Venetia Markham the servant was of course ignorant; but he treated the idea of the Colonel condescending to get married from any but interested motives with derision, saying that he knew the old fellow better than I did. Indeed, he gave me a broad hint that any affections the crabbed veteran had not bestowed early in life upon swords, rifles, and other implements of homi-

cide, had long since become the property of the Ayah, who still retained her hold over them.

According to his statement of the case, Colonel Crowler had discovered in his connexion with his noble wife the political interest which had been hitherto wanting to him, and had purchased her of her titled relations by the settlement of his estates upon her issue by the marriage. The much coveted Order of the Bath, and this appointment to New South Wales, which perhaps took a poor relation out of the country, were the premium paid to him for the completion of his part of the bargain—the sacrifice of his inclination and bachelor liberty. The only person, after all, to be pitied was the poor proud sensitive lady herself; and the whole arrangement afforded a fine illustration of the state of society in which we were then living—at least of its upper ranks. Colonel Crowler had in reality earned, by his gallantry in the field and meritorious length of service, the honourable distinction he now enjoyed; but could never obtain it until he became

connected by marriage with a noble family. The Lady Venetia, on the other hand, was unfortunately the daughter of an earl who was unable to keep up his political importance in the country without running through thirty thousand a-year, so she had at the last gasp been sold by her affectionate elder brother—perhaps by herself—to old age and peevishness, in order that her poverty might not be a reproach to the exalted families with which she had the felicity of being connected.

## CHAPTER IX.

A FAVOURABLE wind soon carried us past the Canaries, where we obtained a fine view of Teneriffe, the usual cap of clouds having been withdrawn from the peak of that picturesque island ; and we were now stretching through the wide expanse of the main ocean down to the tropics. Our fellow-passengers, who had by this time recovered from their sickness, began to struggle on to the quarter-deck with pale looks and discomposed visages, but nothing like sociability followed from these constrained encounters. I had formed a resolution to hold myself, together with my wife,

entirely aloof from all intercourse with them ; and as Colonel Crowler had made it part of his arrangement with the owners of the ship that he and his lady should take every meal apart from the officers and any other passenger on board, we seldom or never encountered in the cuddy.

On meeting the Lady Venetia a second time on board, my suffering was too intense to be described—indeed, I am ashamed to confess how much the struggle with my feelings cost me. But the manner in which that proud woman restrained all outward signs of embarrassment—affecting, as she did, to regard me as a perfect stranger—taught as high a spirit as her own to put a good countenance on this unpleasant rencontre. I called to mind the parting scene at Chartley, where she requested, or rather insisted, that if ever our paths in life crossed each other again, we should meet as strangers ; and the coldness of her eye when it for the first time again met mine, revealed to me that she had neither forgotten nor forgiven the past. The beauty of her face was dimmed—trouble and

vexation had done their work, and she looked pale and unhappy; but something in the bend of her forehead might have told a less observant eye than mine that the old arrogance of her disposition had been aggravated rather than subdued by the misfortunes of her family. I felt that I must keep a strict watch over my demeanour, unless I was desirous of having my feelings again hurt and insulted. Lady Crowler's bearing towards my wife (who, of course, was not aware that I had ever seen her fellow-passenger before) was supercilious beyond measure; but Clarissa, who had taken an instinctive dislike to the whole party, retreated so quietly into herself, that she never encountered them for days together: seldom or never opening her lips unless we happened to be alone; and she would then talk of nothing but her weariness of the voyage and prayers for its speedy termination.

As for the poor Colonel, his health had suffered severely from a prolonged fit of sea-sickness, and when he at last crawled out of his berth—and it was some weeks ere he did so—he appeared to be

more cross-grained than ever. His servant once told me that his master put little or no confidence in any medical man whatever, and generally physicked himself out of his own medicine-chest. Yet with all the caprice of an invalid, the old veteran kept worrying our poor surgeon with incessant complaints or interrogations, chasing him about all over the ship from morning to night. I was once or twice a witness to these agreeable dialogues between them ; and after Colonel Crowler condescended to let him loose, Mr Morrison would shake his head in a very dubious manner.

He once complained to me that it would pretty well ruin his professional prospects in Sydney, if he had the misfortune to lose so important a patient as the Commander of the Forces on the voyage out. His usual ill luck, he said, was working against him again, for nothing short of insanity could have suggested to a person in the Colonel's state of health such an insane freak as again crossing the tropics. I thought that he was not far wrong in his opinion ; and, indeed, as we gradually worked

down into the hot latitudes, the poor gentleman seemed to have some idea himself that he had acted like a madman, for I sometimes caught sight of him holding on by the bulwarks and looking into the sea with a rueful expression over a face now as yellow as a guinea, whilst he soliloquized to himself in something like the following fashion.

“ Ugh, ugh, ugh—cursed mad scheme for a man better fitted for an hospital. Outlived everything—sieges, pitched battles, and the red-hot climate of Bengal, and then to be thrown into this ditch like a dog—a dog would not have made such a fool of himself—married a young wife too—ugh, ugh—no fool like an old fool—liver gone—knew that ten years ago—not enough left to cover a rupee—slip into the grave myself and leave my lady a fine estate in Dorsetshire—ugh, ugh—a trap, a confounded trap, and I have walked into it—live if I can, only to spite—ugh, ugh—these infernal Markhams. Go after the doctor again—where’s the confounded vagabond got to?—ugh, ugh—and bribe him to keep me alive if it’s only to—ugh,

ugh—spite my Lady Crowler and her rascally brothers—ugh, ugh, ugh!"

After this unconscious revelation of the amiable state of his feelings towards the noble relations who had got rid of him on a fool's errand, Colonel Crowler would crawl about the ship until he detected Mr Morrison in what he considered the heinous offence of seeking a little quiet, or giving advice to any other person ; when having caught the culprit, he would pin him to his side for an hour or so, pouring into his ear a long list of his sufferings. When in a worse temper than usual, he would indulge himself in the midst of his entreaties with a few insulting remarks on the poor man's professional knowledge, and wind up by endeavouring to extort from him a promise to land him at Sydney alive at the least, protesting that he would make his fortune two or three times over if satisfied with his skill.

However, the poor old fellow grew weaker and weaker every day, and was at last confined to his berth for two or three mornings at a time ; on

these occasions he gave way to the most terrible fits of despair and nervous irritation, allowing no one to come near him, even to bring him his meals, except the Ayah, who still retained her influence over him—indeed she was the only person who could keep her ill-tempered master in order. Not that Colonel Crowler condescended to restrain his fits of passion in the presence of his favourite more than with anyone else; but the manner of the woman was imperious, and when she spoke to the invalid—and it was always in Bengalee—she appeared to be reproving his impatience and ordering him to keep more quiet. I was rather puzzled what to make of this woman—she was evidently no mere domestic; but although I tried to worm her history out of her fellow-servant, he either knew nothing about her or was pledged to secrecy.

The Ayah was in personal appearance a slight dark woman, with thin intelligent features and silver-gray hair, and although, like many other natives of her country, prematurely old, had evidently once been very beautiful. There was a mark of

high breeding in her compressed lip and the glance of her dark eye which rendered it impossible for one to mistake her for a person of low caste or menial parentage, whilst her abrupt deportment towards her master displayed nothing of the fawning of a mere servant. She spoke, or pretended to speak—for I doubted the real fact—very little English, and if you addressed her, made signs that she did not understand what you were saying; so she was allowed to wander about the ship unmolested, and indulge herself in that cold reserve which all Eastern people can so readily assume when it suits them to enshroud themselves in it. Her feeling towards her old querulous master was evidently a mixed one. She displayed, on most occasions, more than the attachment of a favourite servant; but at the same time that she nursed him most carefully, watching his rapid decline with evident terror and dismay, she assumed over her patient the authority of one who had, at some time at least, filled the position of recognised head of his family, if not supplied the place of a wife.

There were times when she herself gave way to terrible fits of passion, and showed that she considered herself unjustly thrust out of her proper position, and no cajolery of her master could restrain her on these occasions from reproaching and reviling him. After these bursts of violence, she would rush up the companion-steps on to the quarter-deck, sitting there for hours in one position, with her white muslin veil drawn across her face, and apparently brooding over her injuries.

The Ayah—and she did not disguise her feelings—evidently regarded Lady Crowler with perfect hatred; and that haughty woman treated her dark-complexioned sister in a manner calculated to provoke the dislike of a better tempered person than her husband's discarded favourite. But I suspect that a keener passion than mere dislike lurked at the bottom of the ill feeling on both sides, and that the spiteful jealousy of two high-spirited women, brought together in an ambiguous position, caused both of them the most exquisite mental torture. Of course Lady Venetia was not slow to

perceive the advantage which her commanding position, as the recognised wife of the old Colonel, gave her over the rival whose presence wounded her pride, and she took care to exact the service and attendance of a mere lady's-maid from the Ayah on every possible occasion. But I could see that in her heart she was cut to the quick. She had united herself from mere mercenary motives to a man who had not thought it necessary even to remove out of her way the former, and perhaps present, owner of his affections—such as they were. This rankled in her breast, and she could not refrain from occasionally displaying her resentment to Colonel Crowler; who, however, treated her anger with the most perfect indifference, if he did not cherish a malicious triumph in wounding her pride.

One afternoon, on coming rather unexpectedly on to the quarter-deck, I heard the pleasant voice of Colonel Crowler, interrupted as usual by terrific fits of coughing, pitched in a high key, and discovered that he was addressing himself to the

Lady Venetia, who was seated near him. Something had gone wrong between them, and the husband was in a terrible passion. As for his beautiful wife, she sat proudly by the taffrail, and did not deign to vouchsafe one word in answer—yet she was evidently half-choked with emotion.

“D——n it, madam,” said the Colonel, “this is what I cannot and will not endure : I am determined—ugh, ugh, ugh—I am determined to put an end to it. Who and what you were before you condescended—yes—ugh, ugh, ugh—you said CONDESCENDED, madam—ugh, ugh—to marry old Colonel Crowler, and allow your brothers to extort from him the settlement of two-thirds of his fortune—ugh, ugh, ugh—is nothing to me. I am your husband, madam, and if you do not treat me with the respect due to me in that character—ugh, ugh—I will extort it, madam—yes—EXTORT it.

Just then the proud eye of the Lady Venetia met mine. These violent words had been addressed to her, and I had overheard them—had been a witness to her humiliation. She turned her face

away ; but I could see the hot scalding tears fall into the waves as they hurried from the wake of the ship.

Well, the Lady Venetia had taken her own advice, and I on my part had taken the advice she gave me when we separated at Chartley. Both had married “in their own position in life.” Which had found the most happiness in wedlock ?

## CHAPTER X.

WE entered the tropics about the month of July, and had sultry weather, with a hot scorching sun, varied by an occasional squall of rain, in our passage through them. One would be leaning over the taffrail watching a dolphin in the wake of the ship, when a cloud rising to the windward, the sailor at the wheel would wake up and keep a good trick at the helm, while the seamen and boys jumped aloft and furled the sails. When the squall struck us, the whole cloud would appear to burst upon the ship, but in about half an hour the sun would be out again, hot and fiery, and all sail

would be set on the steady old Jessalore, who kept on her course as before. These showers were generally succeeded by warm dry evenings, which I spent pleasantly with my wife on our chosen seat, watching the Great Bear and other northern constellations sink down in the horizon, and the stars of the Southern Hemisphere rise over our heads. Our talk was for the most part of old England, which now appeared to be very dear to us, and of the new home we were seeking. I was uneasy about my wife, and dreaded the trial she must, ere many weeks, pass through. I only discovered how entirely Clarissa had wound herself round my heart when there appeared to be some slight danger that she might be torn from my side—a danger for which my conscience told me I was not altogether irresponsible.

However, when the dreaded event did take place, my fears were for the time set at rest. The weather was fine, and a fresh breeze took us across the Equator in the night without our being aware of

it. Mr Morrison was now in constant attendance upon poor Colonel Crowler, who was confined to his berth, and appeared to be in the last stage of a liver-complaint and general break-up of his constitution ; but the surgeon had conceived a great respect for Clarissa, and bestowed every possible attention on her during her accouchement. In due time I found myself the happy father of a fine little girl, and being assured by Mr Morrison that there was not one unfavourable symptom in my wife's case, I gradually lost all fear for her safety. The gratification of her maternal instincts soothed the heart and revived the spirits of Clarissa, and while contemplating her delight, I hoped that the infant might become as good and exemplary in every respect as its gentle mother.

When at leisure to divert my attention from this little domestic affair of my own, I found all the pity I had to spare bespoken for poor old Colonel Crowler, whom I heard coughing incessantly in his cabin, abandoned there and uncared

for by every human being on board the ship, with the exception of his negro servant and the Ayah, who still attended upon him incessantly.

The Lady Venetia from the very commencement of her husband's illness kept secluded in her separate cabin; but whether she did so entirely of her own freewill is what I will not take upon myself to assert. The black fellow had evidently his own account to give of her conduct, and hinted to me more than once that his master, as he grew worse and worse, at last conceived a positive antipathy to his wife; accusing her of being the party who had deluded him into the indulgence of his fatal whim, and refusing to allow her to enter his cabin on any occasion whatever. Indeed, at last, the only person to whom he would even speak a word was the Ayah, who never quitted his side, but day after day sat crouching down before his couch, with eyes full of emotion to which her tongue could give no utterance; now and then leaning over the poor invalid, coaxing him

to take his medicines : she always addressed him in her own language, perhaps suggesting topics of consolation, and endeavouring to delude both her master and herself into the belief that he might yet recover. The woman had a dark skin—was a benighted heathen, and probably a violator of the ordinances of her own severe creed ; but a warm heart beat in her bosom after all : for weeks did she remain by the sick man's couch, fulfilling the most noble part of a woman's mission ; whilst her fairer sister, who had been brought up in the strict observance, as far as mere outward conformity went, of a religion of charity and other lowly virtues, held aloof—if she did so voluntarily—from the chamber of sickness, although her own husband was the sufferer.

One day—it was about a week after Clarissa's confinement—the wind came on to blow in squalls, between the lulls of which the sun blazed out with fierce intensity. Towards evening the weather rather cleared up, for it did not actually rain,

although the sky looked threatening, and a succession of gusts swept over the sea, causing it to chop about, and hindering the working of the ship. On going on deck to take my usual survey, I exchanged a few words with the man at the helm, who pointed out to me something that he said was a waterspout on the larboard tack, and told me that it prognosticated doubtful weather. After sweeping my glass round the horizon again, and taking another look at the stars as the wind swept across them, I felt the air wet and disagreeable, and was glad to betake myself to my berth, not intending to put my head out of it for the rest of the evening.

However, I soon discovered that I must rest satisfied for that night with as much sleep as I could snatch at uneasy intervals, for I now occupied the cabin adjoining that of Colonel Crowler, having been compelled to alter my arrangements and allow my wife's confinement to take place in her own cabin, that she might not be disturbed by

the poor old invalid's cough. He had been, as I learned from Mr Morrison, more than usually unwell during the day, and on the night in question coughed and moaned incessantly, so that I could get no sleep for hours. At last the monotonous rushing of the waves, as they dashed against the sides of the vessel and parted off the stern, and the sighing of the gusts of wind in the shrouds, lulled me into a deep and refreshing sleep.

I cannot say whether I was dreaming or not, but all of a sudden a loud cry rang through my ears, and caused me to start up on the couch and listen eagerly: but for a few moments all was quiet. I heard the dashing of the waves again, as the ship was making steady headway through the sea, and watched the little lamp which swung before me, wondering whether I was really awake or not. After a few seconds, the stillness was again broken by the hurried trampling of feet on the floor of the next cabin; I heard a harsh gasp-

ing sound, followed by a rattle in the throat, and then arose the sound of a female voice in a wail so loud, shrill, and unearthly, heard as it was in the solitude of the wide ocean and in the dead of the night, that the sound made an indelible impression upon me. I jumped instantly to my feet, guessing at the mournful event which had occurred, and hurrying to the door of Mr Morrison's cabin, entreated him to dress himself and follow me as quickly as he possibly could. When we returned, I found my worst fears confirmed. Colonel Crowler had been taken with a sudden spasm during the night and expired.

Such was the end of this poor cross-grained old veteran. After making every allowance for the disappointments which had fallen to his lot in early life, and giving him full credit for the possession of that fine masculine quality, an inflexible tenacity of purpose, one feels compelled to confess that he threw away his last remnant of life like a fool. Fortune, the ficklest of

jilts to most men, had been kind and constant to him ; she had stood his friend at a pinch more than once, and had carried him triumphantly through all kinds of scrapes and hazards. He was ready to throw away his life as nothing worth on the walls of St Sebastian ; but Fortune, although she punished him for the rash exploit, took care that he should live to learn prudence for the future. New Orleans was the grave of many a healthier soldier than Colonel Crowler ; but here his very feebleness stood his friend, for he was laid up with the yellow-fever at the time that Jackson and his Yankee riflemen were keeping a sharp look out for every Britisher who raised his cap a few inches over the canebrakes of the Mississippi. When Fortune could do no more for him, she just kept him alive in the febrile climate of the West Indies, and sent him home with a parting hint to keep quiet. He put his head for a third time into the lion's mouth, but she overlooked the refractory trick of her wilful

favourite, and carried him safely through the disastrous expedition to Burmah. Many a younger man went at night to his berth in the flotilla sound and hearty, and next day was missing with the whole of his boat's crew ; yet this old spoilt child of Fortune never received a scratch.

When many years' service had rendered Colonel Crowler a shattered old veteran, fairly worn out by his perilous adventures by flood and field, his benignant patroness kindly removed his elder brother out of her favourite's way, and sent him home to the paternal mansion to take his ease for the remainder of his days. But even this sudden accession of property could not render him a contented man ; he had set his heart upon obtaining the riband of the Bath, and by his childish hankering after a bauble, disgusted indulgent Fortune, who turned her back upon the rebel, and allowed him to follow his own insane courses. The result of his obstinacy was before my eyes ; and I read in it, when too late, a warning to my own wilfulness.

Colonel Crowler died in the tropics—would be thrown overboard in a few hours—and the Lady Venetia, or some one else who cared quite as little what became of him, succeeded to his estates.

## CHAPTER XI.

IT must be a pleasant subject of contemplation to a person of a cynical turn of mind to reflect of how little importance he may become when he no longer possesses the power of making himself utterly disagreeable. During his lifetime, poor old quarrelsome Colonel Crowler had rendered himself about the most important person on board the ship, and even managed to bully the captain and cook into obeying his mandates ; but now he was dead, the whole crew treated his corpse with the most revolting indifference, and made the arrangements for his interment with the usual callousness of seafaring people. As the weather, which was

settling down to a still calm, had become intolerably sultry, they were compelled to lose no time in committing the Colonel's remains to the deep, and the sailmaker and black servant began to make the scanty arrangements for a funeral at sea a few short hours after the breath left the body. The black was rather attached to his master than otherwise, and had no relish for the sight of mortality ; but he possessed the usual light temper of coloured people, and even when he came out of the chamber of death on one errand or another, would return to it singing some negro melody.

Whether the Lady Venetia felt any unfeigned regret at the sudden departure of her cross-grained old husband it was impossible for me to ascertain personally ; as she confined herself closely to her own cabin. She had been persuaded to give one parting look at the livid features of the deceased, but instantly rushed out of the place with exclamations of horror at the sight of death brought immediately home to her. This incident was related to me by Mr Morrison, who told me that she

displayed more regret for the loss of her old tyrant than one might have expected, and was much affected when she brooded over the loneliness of her position on board ship. She had also, he said, a great dread of landing at Sydney as a widow and without much protection; while the voyage home, which must be made in the society of no better companions than the negro and Ayah, caused her the liveliest apprehensions. Altogether, she felt that she had lost a protector, although one who during his lifetime had given her no reason to entertain any regard for him.

But there is no departure from this life of strong enduring ties and melancholy bereavements altogether unmourned: the death of the most abject leaves a place vacant by some hearth; the most vicious win the regards of some menial or follower, blurred and spotted images of our common humanity though they may be. Nero's urn was crowned by unseen hands with a funeral garland; and a little spaniel was found nestled between the knees of a slaughtered serf after

the battle of the Alma. There was one real mourner over the lifeless remains of the poor old colonel, and that was the ill-treated Ayah. As long as her master's face was left exposed to view, she sat at the foot of the couch on which they had stretched the body, shrouded in her ample veil, and abandoning herself to a hopeless sorrow, only rising at long intervals to gaze on the features of the dead, and reproach him in her native tongue for forsaking her. When she had worked herself up by degrees into a terrible fit of excitement, in the course of which she indulged in the most frantic exclamations of despair, she would seat herself again on the floor of the cabin, and there, drawing her veil closely around her, remain mute and motionless, as one of the idols of her own country viewed by moonlight in the half-hidden recesses of a dim pagoda; so still she sat, her dusky arms (rendered still more dark by the rich silver bracelets which she always wore) crossed over her breast, and her head bent down to her knees. And there did she remain, hour after hour,

silent and disconsolate, refusing to take nourishment, and the bitterness of her anguish unrelieved by a tear.

In the course of the evening, Mr Morrison came round to my berth, and asked me if I should like to take one last look of our ill-starred fellow-passenger ; and being accustomed to feel towards the dead something more than a mere outward respect, I immediately complied with his request. Following him into the cabin, I found the sailmaker and negro still there sewing up the corpse, whilst the Ayah crouched at the foot of it in the posture I have before described. When they were about to cover the face, the surgeon bent over the poor woman, and endeavoured in a very kind voice to convey to her mind what the men were about ; she appeared to understand him, for she immediately rose, gave one long fixed look on the closed eyes and livid lips, and when Mr Morrison quietly motioned her away, rushed out of the cabin with a piercing cry of anguish. Respecting the woman's attachment to her master, I sought to console

her in her distress ; so as she ran up the poop, which she did nimbly, I followed after her at my leisure.

On coming upon deck it appeared that the weather had now fallen to a dead calm, and I beheld one of the most magnificent sunsets it has ever been my fortune to witness, even within the golden regions of the tropics. No words can picture the gorgeous hues of the clouds, which the burning orb fired with its resplendent beams ; while the vast undulating ocean was lulled into a tranquil flood of liquid silver, only broken by the form of a lazy turtle as it just drifted across the bows of the ship fast asleep, and by the Jessalore itself ; which, as I looked up between the yards, appeared a most beautiful object, covered as she was with a perfect cloud of white canvass—royal-sails, sky-sails, studding-sails, all crowded upon her tapering masts and spars, and only just unfolding their snowy bosoms to the air as a slight breeze took them, and then falling lazily on to the tackle again. The hemisphere was covered from the zenith to the dip

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earnestness, and I trust some sincerity, the woman appeared to catch the drift of my meaning, even if she did so imperfectly; for a light came over her face, mingled with an expression of calm resolution which I shall not easily forget: she rose from her seat, and after kissing my hand with an air of deep gratitude, retired with a tranquillized mien to her own cabin, from which she did not stir during the rest of the day.

I was roused at daybreak the next morning by Mr Morrison, who told me that the burial would soon take place, and suggested that I should be present at it. As we had no chaplain on board, our captain had requested the surgeon to read the Church of England service over the corpse, and he had come to my cabin to ask me to make the responses for him. On reaching the deck, I found that the calm had not broken during the night, and that the morning was already unendurably close and sultry. The ship's deck had been washed, she had been put into the best possible order in other respects, and the captain, who was quite sober, had

made all the arrangements for the solemn ceremony with a great deal of proper feeling. Lady Crowler, who was too unwell to come upon deck, was to watch the interment from the window of one of the cabins, and as the fact of the occurrence of a death on board ship was to be concealed from my wife altogether, they were to lower the body into the deep on the opposite side of the vessel to that in which she was confined. The Ayah, as her fellow-servant told me, had preferred to hold herself aloof and take no part in the ceremony, probably being forbidden to do so by her religion.

On just glancing round the vessel, I saw the woman seated, as she had been the previous evening, on the quarter-deck, leaning over the bulwark, and looking down on to the bright glassy surface of the wide ocean, as it lay in a deep slumber, basking in the fiery beams of a tropical sun which was climbing rapidly up the horizon. The captain and mate were standing in the ship's waist; and a serious expression settled down on all countenances when the negro and one of the sailors brought the

corpse out of the poop: even the man at the wheel paused for a moment and drew a deep breath before he turned the ship's head again, and just kept her off and on.

Mr Morrison commenced reading our sublime and charitable funeral-service in a quiet impressive voice, and I made the responses to him with a heavy heart, gazing between the pauses on the poor earth at my feet, and reflecting that it was about to make its last home in the desolate depths of the ocean. Its bones would fall asunder, and be scattered in the ooze of the sea forlorn and companionless: no feet of its fellow-creatures would visit its sepulchre, or pay to the lonely spirit the natural but perhaps unrecognised tribute of a visit of respectful commemoration.

When we came to the impressive words—"therefore we commit his body to the deep"—two of the sailors lowered the corpse gently into the sea; and whilst we bent forward to take a last look at it, a loud exclamation which we heard from the man

at the wheel made us all turn our eyes in the direction of the stern of the ship. What we saw was the work of an instant, but cannot be described in two or three lines.

Just as the body touched the water, the Ayah rose swiftly from her seat and stood poised on the railing round the quarter-deck. She threw with a skilful and unerring hand on to the surface of the water, a small china saucer, in which she had placed a little lamp burning, and round it a beautiful wreath of artificial flowers. It floated on the swell of the ocean for a few seconds, tilted over, and then sinking with a ripple, was seen no more. At the same moment the woman spread out her arms wildly and threw herself overboard head foremost. She appeared to fly through the air, gathering her garments gracefully around her as she went, and moving her lips quickly as if she uttered some prayer in her native tongue. When she touched the water, her form cut through it like a bird, disappearing instantaneously, and the long heavy swell closed over her

almost at the same instant that it parted to receive the body of her master. The Ayah, who, I have no doubt, was a woman of high caste in her own country, had perhaps deluded herself into the belief that her connexion with Colonel Crowler was tantamount to one of marriage ; so when she found that he had been removed from the world, leaving her lonely and friendless behind him, she had probably taken a resolution not uncommon with Hindoo widows, and had determined not to survive the man whom she considered to be her husband. The body was committed to the deep, instead of being burned, as that of one of her own nation would have been in Hindostan ; and she had no resource therefore save to immolate herself by drowning, if she desired to bear him company to another state of existence.

A cry of horror arose from us all at this sudden and fatal catastrophe. A boat was instantly lowered, but there was no chance of saving the poor creature's life. She never made a struggle as she sank, or rose to the surface ; and the boat, after

beating about for a quarter of an hour, returned. The ship was put about, and we made what way on our voyage we were able, notwithstanding the calm, for we could not endure to remain over what appeared to our imaginations a charnel-house in the sea. Such was the death of the Ayah.

## CHAPTER XII.

SUDDEN death is awful at any time ; but when it occurs at sea, and amongst a limited number of people cooped up in one small vessel, the impression made by it is disheartening in the extreme. It is not surprising, therefore, that the death of Colonel Crowler, followed as it was by the suicide of the Ayah, cast a gloom over the little society on board the Jessalore, and rendered the remainder of a voyage, at no time very cheering, most uncomfortable.

The crew, who were already dispirited by bad treatment, and entertained no respect for their captain or confidence in his discretion, became more

downhearted every day. They went about their work with downcast looks and in a spiritless manner, and whenever they could escape observation, might be seen clustered in groups of two or three together in the forecastle, indulging in gloomy forebodings of an unlucky termination to the voyage, or telling some of those strange wild stories of sudden death, accompanied by previous warnings, of which the memories of most sailors are full.

A shark just at that time kept in the wake of the ship for a couple of days, and the men insisted that the ravenous monster had followed us down from the Equator, and that as long as it accompanied them, death was impending over the head of some one on board. Several others gave a romantic turn to conversations they had held with the old colonel (who probably felt very unwell from the day we weighed anchor in Plymouth Sound) and insisted that he had foretold his own death; and that before we reached the Cape. The black man and ship's cook did nothing but hang about the galley spinning long yarns respecting the Ayah, whose his-

tory, now she was gone, her fellow-servant, as a matter of course, turned into a tale of wonder—indeed offered to take his oath that once or twice she had given him ocular proof that she was an enchantress. The fellows agreed in the conclusion that the week's calm which followed the suicide of the poor creature, had been conjured up by her spirit; and when they talked about the stormy Indian Ocean, shook their heads doubtfully, prognosticating that the phantom would go before us until we were out of the latitude of her native country, when it would seize hold of the opportunity of transmigrating into the body of a tiger or some other fierce animal; but that until rid of it, we should be continually vexed by head-winds and hurricanes.

Superstitious fears are at all times contagious, and even to hear this loose talk among the crew rendered me uneasy; but I had a more rational cause for my misgivings, for I knew well that if the men lost heart they would not work the ship in a spirited manner, and saw that our captain

became daily more unfitted to keep his hand over them. During the lifetime of Colonel Crowler he stood to a certain degree in awe of such an important personage as the Commander of the Forces, and had not dared to indulge his propensity for drink in the same barefaced manner as he did after the restraint of the ill-tempered veteran's company was removed. But his vexation at losing his dignified passenger, and the melancholy suicide of the Ayah, had taken strong hold upon the shattered nerves of the man, and he now drank to desperation merely to drown thought. I observed that he became every day more capricious and obstinate in the way in which he gave his orders, and could not shake off my dread that some catastrophe or other would befall us when we got into foul weather, or were hauling along upon a lee-shore.

Clarissa had by this time ventured on to the quarter-deck once more, and I could not at all times conceal from her penetrating eye, the forebodings which haunted me. She soon, therefore,

got out of me the real state of affairs on board ship, but was too patient to reproach me, or indulge in any complaints; though she would sit by my side with her little girl in her lap for hours together without speaking, indulging in a kind of melancholy reverie. Ill at ease myself, I felt doubly unhappy at observing the depression brooding on the spirits of my poor wife, and endeavoured to divert her mind by talking of the end of our voyage, or the beautiful scenery of Port-Jackson.

If by any chance I caught sight of the first mate, I was in the habit of going forward, telling Clarissa that the officer was a good seaman, and we could rely upon the truth of what he stated. When I did put a question or two to the mate, he generally calmed our fears, although at the same time he shook his head at the doings of his captain. He said that we should have plenty of sea-room when we crossed the bight of the Indian Ocean, and that the Jessalore—to which he had served his apprenticeship—was a tough old India-man, who would shake every stick out of her hull

before she sprang a leak. He added, that once through Bass's Straits, there was not the least danger off the coast of Australia, as the wind seldom or never blew home beyond King George's Sound, and fogs were almost unknown on the shores of that sunny continent.

By repeating to Clarissa these little conversations with the chief-officer, I managed to render her a little less uneasy; that was all it was in my power to do. With regard to my own spirits, a rooted alarm and vague apprehension of misfortune had taken possession of them, which no rational assurance of safety from the best seaman on the ocean could have removed. I had arrived at the conviction that we were involved in some fatality which hung over the Jessalore and every soul on board of her. If this were not the case, why had my destiny again become linked with the lot of the Lady Venetia?—why had the voyage hitherto been so full of troubles and forewarnings for that unfortunate woman? I had learned from experience that whenever our paths crossed, nothing

but misfortune was in store for both, and feared that the ravelled web of our destinies would ere-long become inextricably entangled, and then some angry hand would cut it short altogether. So far my fears were selfish; but bitter was the anguish that darted across my breast when I thought of my wife and dear little girl, two innocent victims whose fates had been involved in the stormy destiny of my own malignant horoscope.

Often, too, did I deplore the forlorn position of a woman I had once loved—for, with all my ambitious aspirations, love was at the bottom of the motives which allured me to court the refusal of my proffered hand—and on more than one occasion did I half make up my mind to speak to her, offering her in plain manly terms my protection during the voyage, and any good offices in my power to render her at Sydney. Clarissa also, whose heart bled for her fellow-passenger, frequently urged me to tender her own services to Lady Crowler, and state that she would, as far as her ability went, supply the place of the Ayah to her.

Nay, I suspect that she did on one occasion do so in person, but in all probability met with a repulse.

Lady Crowler still held herself aloof, took her meals in her own cabin, and never deigned to come on to the quarter-deck when she had the slightest suspicion that we should encounter each other ; and if we met by accident, she put on a cold, scornful expression of countenance, and went below immediately. At last, I altogether abandoned my intention of tendering my services to her, and came to the conclusion that any accumulation of misery could be borne with a stout heart by one of the Markhams, provided that the burden was not rendered utterly intolerable by exposure to the scrutiny of the ignoble crowd grouped around them, and to the insult of its pity.

Yet on one occasion I observed a little incident, during which the indurated crust of pride that had been suffered to grow up within the breast of this poor victim of an artificial state of society, was for a few moments torn aside, and a woman's heart was beheld beating in her bosom.

The day had been sultry, but towards evening a cool breeze sprang up, and we were as usual seated on the poop enjoying it. I pointed out to Clarissa the Magellanic clouds, observing that I should be happy to exchange them for Charles's Wain and the Pole-star. Just then seeing the mate in the ship's waist leaning over the bulwark, I went up to him to ask him our place on the globe's surface ; for he had been taking an observation during the day.

The evening was splendid ; the galaxy with its double meridian of glory spanned the billows like an arch of jewels, scintillating with ineffable splendour, whilst occasionally a silent flash of lightning quivered in the horizon, in the direction towards which our ship with her canvass wings outspread seemed gliding with the majestic skimming motion of the great albatross ; and as the wind wafted her along, the light again and again flashed before the halls of the south as if the genii of the deep had been charged to guide us on our path, and were waving

these torches of welcome before the portals of their mansion.

After we had exchanged a few words, the mate went on some errand or other to the forepart of the vessel, and I stood for some minutes enjoying the magnificent spectacle before I returned to the poop. Standing with one foot on the ladder, I observed with surprise that my wife was no longer seated there alone: Lady Crowler had joined her, and the two were in conversation together. As their heads were both bent down, they did not at first observe that I was so near, and I was careful not to interrupt them, being very much gratified with what I saw. The Lady Venetia was evidently talking in a quiet friendly way to my wife, and taking notice of the infant slumbering on her knee. As she now and then looked up, there was a gentleness in her fine blue eyes and a smile on her lips as if she had just been venturing to kiss our little girl, but not so as to disturb its rest, and I thought that never before had she looked so feminine or more truly

beautiful. Clarissa was gazing upon her child with matronly pride, mingled with a mother's fondness, and was evidently calling her companion's attention to its healthy beauty. I held my breath, and was careful not to disturb a scene so lovely, thinking that I might never again witness anything more delightful. Here were two women, one of a reserved temper yet humble, the other proud and arrogant beyond measure, brought together by sympathy with the innocence and helplessness of infancy, and taught that they had feelings in common.

After a time the Lady Venetia happened to turn her head in the direction in which I was standing. I approached, and as I drew near the whole enchantment vanished ; dissolving like some lovely picture wrought of the burnished clouds of a gorgeous sunset. Lady Venetia, who looked exceedingly vexed at being detected in what might be construed as an act of weakness, immediately rose from her seat, sweeping past me in a haughty and almost insulting manner. She did not quit

her cabin during that or the whole of the next day, and was understood to be indisposed.

Clarissa told me afterwards, that on the night in question her fellow-passenger had condescended to speak to her in the manner in which one woman ought to address another, whatever the conventional difference in their rank may be, but that she kept a close guard over herself on all future occasions ; and added, that she on her part had no desire to address Lady Crowler again, or tender her services to her, only to earn a rebuff as a reward for her good intentions.

## CHAPTER XIII.

WE gave the Cape a wide berth in our passage to the vicinity of the Indian Ocean, but did not escape the belt of tempestuous weather which vexes the mariner in those latitudes. We scudded along for days together under close-reefed topsails with the bowsprit half under water, whilst the heavy seas that took the ship poured through the bowports. At other times there seemed an immense valley of water heaving and shifting around us, as the ship slowly climbed the ascent of one gigantic bilow, and after pausing upon its unsteady ridge, plunged down into a frightful abyss, from which, after a violent pitch and shudder, she climbed

another mountainous ascent and then another. On these occasions we had no occupation for three or four days at a time, except to watch the little petrels now glancing over these watery Alps, skimming swiftly to the top of a billow, now resting in the valley, appearing as if walking the waters ; or else to gaze upon the grave melancholy albatross, poised motionless with outstretched wings over the wide waste of ocean.

Our captain's conduct in navigating the ship had by this time become a string of self-contradictions. He would frequently, as the mate told me, set the foresail and topmast studding sails—I will not guarantee that I use these nautical terms correctly—when it was coming on to blow, and then the sailors would have to spring aloft and hold on by their eyelids in the teeth of a gale, in order to take in the canvass, which “slattened” against the ropes and threatened to tear the masts out of the ship. The chief officer was evidently apprehensive for the safety of the vessel, and one day when he was showing me the progress made by the log, observed

that the best thing we could all pray for would be a speedy termination of the voyage. He told me that we should not have been far off Bass's Straits by that time; but that, owing to the variableness of the weather, they had abandoned the idea of taking the *Jessalore* through them, so that our voyage would be prolonged to a certain extent by the circuit round Van Diemen's Land. When I retailed this vexatious news to Clarissa, she was much more annoyed than I had often seen her, for she had talked of nothing during the last week but our anticipated landing at Sydney. As for the *Lady Venetia*, she still confined herself as a close prisoner to her cabin, and we saw nothing of her, and heard little concerning her.

One morning, after a couple of days of tolerable weather, I saw when I came on deck a perfect shoal of porpoises round the ship, while a steady wind was blowing freshly. Mr Boynton, the second mate, was just by, so I went up to him to inquire what this strange sight meant. The mate was silent for a few minutes, and then replied that

a spectacle like this often preceded a storm, and that the first mate had told him that the glass was falling rapidly. However, he observed, that as the Jessalore was a tough old girl, a bit of a squall would only drive us along, and bring us perhaps in a couple of days to Van Diemen's Land.

Whilst we were speaking together, the wind fell all of a sudden, and a little black cloud rose to the windward. The captain came out of his cabin and began to walk the deck; and the first mate, after going aft and taking his orders, sent the hands aloft to furl the sails. It now grew fearfully dark, and not a breath stirred the waters, when all of a sudden a ball of pale light stood on the topgallant mast, and then glided down on to the yard-arm. The sailor on the yard did not relish his neighbour, and called to the man below to look out for the "corposant," as he called it; then passing the last rope through the earring, he came upon deck, whither the other glided after him, looking very pale, and with a serious expression on his countenance.

Some large heavy drops of rain now fell, and there was a sudden increase of the darkness. Low growling thunder was heard—a few vivid flashes of lightning were seen ; and then peal after peal rolled over our heads with the roar of heavy artillery, while the cloud seemed to open just above us and to pour down in one sheet of water. Of a sudden the squall struck us ; the ship, shivering as in an agony of terror, turned over nearly on her beam-ends, and then rushed along under bare poles with the forecastle one smother of foam. Suddenly the man at the wheel, who was straining as if for life and death, while the helm came hard up and hard down, called out to us in a loud voice to hold on for our lives ; in another moment a tremendous sea came rolling onward and struck the ship, making a clean breach over it. I held on with all my might, and, when I regained breath, gave ourselves up for lost ; for I saw the man thrown from the wheel across the quarter-deck, and nearly hurled overboard, while another mountain wave rolled on to us. The first mate, seeing our danger,

sprang instantly to the wheel, and by a violent effort brought the ship up just in time; and the Jessalore, shaking herself dry like a huge spaniel when he quits the water, came to, and gallantly dashed through the wave.

After receiving such a rough warning as this, and reflecting that I was not much of a sailor and had been risking a life not altogether my own property to no good end, I retreated to the shelter of the poop, where I knew that I should find my wife in an agony of terror. On entering our cabin, I saw that Clarissa was in a state of great consternation, for she did nothing but clasp her infant to her breast, and thank Heaven that the innocent creature was at least not conscious of her danger. I made light of the storm to the poor dismayed creature, assuring her that there was no cause for apprehension so long as we had plenty of sea-room; and the surgeon, who just then came out of Lady Crowler's cabin, corroborated the statement. My wife, with her usual good sense, allowed her fears to be calmed, and if she laboured under any

misgivings, kept them to herself; and just then a lull in the storm really did take place, although it lasted but for a few minutes.

In about four hours the worst of the hurricane had blown over; but there was still enough wind left to be called a gale, and the heavy seas kept taking the ship, which, as they struck her, groaned mournfully. About nine o'clock in the evening the wind had so far gone down that I ventured upon deck, and found the waves still running high and the wind howling in the shrouds; but the captain had been able to carry a little sail in order to steady the ship, and it eased her considerably. On inquiring what damage had been done by the sea which swept the deck, I learned that it had made a clean sweep of such freight as hencoops and empty casks, and, what was rather serious, had stove in the long boat, which had been in a leaky condition during the whole voyage out. This made the crew look rather blank, for it only left them the jolly boat to trust to in case of a disaster; but they consoled themselves with the reflection

that the *Jessalore* was water-tight, and that we were at the end of our voyage instead of the commencement of it.

Altogether, I felt reassured by what I heard on deck, and returned with a light heart and cheerful countenance to inform my wife that we had only received a parting hug from the Indian Ocean after all. I added, that when once off Van Diemen's Land, we might look for settled weather, observing that in any case it must be glad news for her to hear that the voyage was really coming to a close. We spent the evening happily together—indeed, we had never passed a more cheerful one since our early married days—chiefly talking of what we now considered the old times when I had just recovered from my illness, and how we were in the habit of sitting by our own fireside and calculating our scanty resources, taking great pride in some desperate fit of economy which perhaps saved five shillings. As she dandled the infant, and caressed and talked to it as fond mothers do, we spoke of the new hopes dawning upon our future,

and pictured a state of happiness to be shared in the new world with our little daughter. These hopes and anticipations, delusive as they may be, are sweet and known only to parents, and I never on any former occasion beheld or knew Clarissa happier.

Thus the evening wore away, and although I had at first merely forced my spirits, I really worked myself at last into a cheerful temper; and when we parted for the night, we were both tranquil and free from apprehension. The whistling of the wind soon lulled me to sleep, and it was then that a beautiful dream presented itself to my fancy. Methought that I was in Clarissa's cabin instead of my own, with the young mother and her cherub of a child sleeping sweetly at my side. The cabin-window was open, and a sudden impulse urged me to rise and gaze upon the face of the ocean, stretched before me in a wide calm mirror and bathed in moonlight—not that which visits us in our dull northern clime, but one gush of radiant glory, silvering the whole expanse beneath

her, and lighting up the hemisphere with a blue glitter. The round orb of the moon appeared to stoop herself from the concave and walk upon the waters, making a path of brightness beneath her feet. All of a sudden, whilst I was leaning out of the window in an entranced mood, hanging over the beautiful watery pavement beneath, the calm opened its rippled lips in a broad furrow, and the pale form of my poor mother, clad in a white robe, and with her rich brown hair hanging dishevelled over her shoulders, rose from the chasm. As she upturned her large meek eyes towards heaven, she came along the moon-tracked waters with the calm gliding motion of a spirit, and passing through the side of the cabin, stood with hands clasped across her breast, and her head bent down over the couch upon which my wife and infant were reposing, casting on them a sweet sad look of immortal pity.

Although it was merely a dream, I yet recollected that this mournful apparition had never visited my slumber save when it came to warn me of some impending disaster. I struggled to

speak to the phantom—to interrogate it as to what dreadful calamity threatened two innocent beings whose safety was far dearer to me than my own—but although I opened my lips, the breath died away within them, and no audible sound would come forth. I made a desperate struggle for utterance, and then woke up with a start.

I gasped for breath, and passed my hand across my forehead. It was a mere dream after all: but was the noise and confusion I just then heard upon deck a part of it? I listened eagerly: for the moment the sounds had died away, and nothing broke the silence except the groaning of the vessel as she pitched through the heavy seas one after another. Coming to the conclusion that I had been dreaming on for a few seconds after waking up, I composed myself to sleep again, but just then heard the sound of renewed confusion, mixed with the trampling of heavy feet, and cries of hoarse voices calling to each other in evident dismay. I was not mistaken—something had gone wrong during the night. Hastily slipping on my clothes,

which were just at hand, I crept gently into my wife's cabin, in order to ascertain that all was right there. Clarissa was in a calm deep slumber, breathing heavily, with her infant lying quite motionless across her bosom. I leaned over the dear ones for a few minutes, whilst my eyes became dewed with tears, and then rushed on to the deck, in order to ascertain what was the matter.

## CHAPTER XIV.

THE dawn was just breaking, and the sea still running high, with a cold chilly wind. Going forward on the deck, I saw the second mate and four or five sailors clustered round the main hatchway in great confusion. The captain was standing apart on the quarter-deck making violent gesticulations and apparently quite beside himself, whilst the first mate, who stood near him, was talking with great earnestness depicted on his countenance.

On drawing near the group, I noticed that several other men were running towards the hatchway with buckets in their hands, and that one of them

was just going down into the hold. The surgeon, who in all probability had been roused like myself by the tumult upon deck, was standing looking on, with his hands folded behind his back and a very placid expression of countenance. He was evidently taking the whole affair in the most unconcerned manner possible—so I went up to him.

“Mr Morrison, what can possibly be the matter? Surely the carelessness of some of the crew has not set the ship on fire?”

“It looks something like it, Mr Elvington,” answered the surgeon, with a shrug of the shoulders. “Do you see the smoke there coming up through the hatchway?”

Just as he spoke, a thin wreath of vapour curled up from the hold of the ship, and was followed by a thick volume of black smoke; while the man whom I had seen go below came up again in a fit of great agitation, trembling in every limb. He told us in a hurried manner that the spirits had caught fire, and it was impossible for him or any human being to stand the intense heat any longer.

As he spoke a spire of bright flame shot up between the timbers of the deck, but was for the moment suppressed by the contents of several bucketfuls of water thrown down the hold by the seamen.

“Good Heaven!” exclaimed I to my friend; “cannot this fire be got under? Can we render any assistance?”

“I fear very little,” answered Mr Morrison. “On the contrary, we may put some of these fellows out of their way, and make a bad job a worse one. I have been in my time in ships which had sprung a leak, and have rigged a pump and worked it with the heartiest seaman on deck; but this is a terrible accident, and we had better do nothing without the captain’s permission — although, to confess the truth, the scoundrel is the cause of the whole of the mischief: he is, as you see, half out of his senses.”

“How can he possibly be the cause of such a dreadful disaster as this?” I inquired.

“The old story,” replied the surgeon, “drink—

drink. We have intrusted our lives to the hands of a drunkard, and are likely to pay the penalty of our want of forethought. The captain, who has been up all night working the ship in this bit of a breeze, thought fit to keep himself awake by the assistance of his old enemy. Finding about half an hour ago that he had got to the bottom of every gill of brandy above decks, he sent the steward, who was himself half-asleep, into the hold to fill a keg from some casks there. The fellow allowed a spark to fall on to the spirits, and both ends of one of the casks blew out. The ignited spirit flowed along the floor, and soon reached a cargo of coals, which was shot there handy for the use of the galley : I have no doubt that by this time they are all of a blaze. It is a very bad job, Mr Elvington ; and, what is worse, I do not readily see how you and I can make it a better one. But here comes that villain of a captain, and we shall hear what he has to say about it."

Just then the captain came hurriedly forward, followed by the first mate, who appeared to be in

a sad state of perplexity. The former walked up to the scene of the accident, and looked down into the hold. He was evidently very much intoxicated, and spoke and acted in all respects like a madman. Violent as his conduct appeared to be, I could not refrain from addressing him, and inquiring whether there was any danger.

“ Danger, sir!” answered he, in a quarrelsome tone, evidently assumed to hide his shame; “ what the devil do you mean, sir? All I can say is, that there is a cargo of gunpowder in the hold, and if the fire reaches it, the ship will be blown to pieces in two minutes.”

This confession appeared to strike the sailors around us with perfect dismay, and there was a general exclamation that we were all lost. The first mate, who saw the necessity of keeping the men under some kind of subordination as long as it was possible, volunteered to go down into the hold; he returned almost immediately, declaring that the fire was spreading in every direction, and that the fumes from the coals would suffocate

him if he remained exposed to them. As he spoke bright spires and tongues of livid flame began to creep through the crevices and play above the planks of the deck, and it was manifest that the conflagration was gaining upon us. All control over the crew was lost—the captain gave frantic orders, but no one paid any attention to them. Some ran about with buckets in their hands, but forgot to fill them, and others followed the mate, who kept himself perfectly calm and collected, towards the long boat; which as usual was all of a tangle in the rigging of the ship.

The mate, whose character and courage appeared to rise with the extremity of our peril—for on ordinary occasions he was far from a resolute man—spoke a few sensible words to the sailors about him. He told them that everything depended upon their keeping themselves cool. He said that the long boat was their only chance—as for the jolly boat it could not live on the sea, as it was then running, for ten minutes. The boat was not in good order, but something might be done to

make it water-tight ; they must however act under his orders, or they would never get her into the water at all. These and a few other sensible speeches reassured the sailors, and they promised to obey their officer even in defiance of the captain, should he attempt to interfere with the mate.

I stood behind them for some minutes in order to learn whether there was any real chance of their getting the boat afloat. They sent some tarpaulin into her, with a few planks, and the carpenter set to work in order to stop the leak as well as he could in the few minutes allowed him. I then rushed off towards the poop to rouse my poor wife, and on my way there overtook Mr Morrison. He was walking with very deliberate steps in the same direction, and told me, in a cool quiet voice, that he thought it his duty to rouse Lady Crowler and prepare her mind for the worst.

In the captain's cabin we lighted on the steward, who was running on to the deck, followed by the black servant. I spoke in a severe tone to the rascal who had been the cause of the mishap, but he was

evidently cowed with terror, and went forward without answering a word. As the negro was about to follow him, I ordered the fellow to rouse his mistress ; but the black, who, to all appearance, did not give himself the slightest trouble about her safety, looked blank, and said, “ Ebbery one for hisself in dese yere screws : ” he then pushed past me.

I discovered Clarissa, who had just been roused by the clamour upon deck, sitting up on her couch in a half-dreamy state of perplexity, for she was not yet thoroughly awake. I took her gently by the shoulder, and stammered out a few words, informing her that a fire had broken out on board the ship. The danger, I said, was not great, but she had better dress herself. My poor wife, upon whose mind the awful fact gradually dawned as she recovered her recollection, was at first paralyzed with dismay ; she merely clasped her hands over her head in an agony of fear. She then hurried on a few clothes, and without speaking one word, followed me mechanically on to the deck, soothing

her infant, which was sobbing—for it had been startled out of a sound sleep—and pressing it tenderly to her breast as she walked along.

Just as we came into the open air I heard a loud exclamation of terror from the men who were getting the long boat ready for sea, and several stifled cries of anguish some distance off the vessel. On looking over the side, I was partly a witness of the terrible catastrophe which was the cause of their dismay. Two or three of the more disorderly part of the crew had been joined by the steward and black servant, and, running towards the taffrail, had lowered the jolly boat, then jumping into her without giving themselves one thought concerning the safety of any other person in the ship, had cast off the painter. The boat rocked up and down between the mountainous waves like a cockle-shell for three or four minutes; the fellows kept her off the ship, resolutely refusing to give any one else a chance of his life in her, when all of a sudden a tremendous breaker rolled on to her, and she was gone. The sailors who were getting the long

boat ready told me that they saw the expression on the faces of their drowning messmates distinctly, and that it was awful in the extreme. Just then one man, who could swim, and had by a desperate effort climbed up by the chains, came aft, looking as white as a sheet. The fellow appeared stupefied by terror, and paid no heed to the reproaches of his companions, but threw himself down at the foot of the mast, putting his hand before his eyes, and from this posture he never stirred as long as I looked at him.

The surgeon now came up to us again, and I asked him the reason that Lady Crowler did not accompany him. He told me that he had with some difficulty roused his fellow-passenger, but that she appeared to be struck powerless by fear, and positively refused to dress herself or quit the shelter of the poop. I pointed out to him my wife, who was seated near me on some canvass, hushing her infant which had fallen asleep again, and told him that we intended to take our chance in the long boat. I impressed upon him that it was his

duty to save Lady Crowler's life even against her own will, and that if she refused to enter the long boat, he must take her into it by main force, for it was the only chance left to her or any of us. Mr Morrison replied that he would do the best he could for her, and that without wasting one thought upon his own preservation; for which, to tell the truth, he cared nothing. The vessel would be lost he foresaw, and the best thing he (Mr Morrison) could do, would be to go down with her.

"What," said I, "do you not intend to jump into the long boat when she is launched?"

"I shall see about it," was the cool answer. "If I find a comfortable berth going begging, I shall get into her; and if her crew be made up without me, I shall take my chance with the ship. My career in life has been a most unprosperous one, and I am perfectly indifferent about living or dying. I made several voyages to India, and, when I had saved a few hundreds, married an amiable woman to whom I had been many years engaged, and endeavoured to get together a practice

in my native town. I was not successful, and fell behind-hand in the world—they made me a bankrupt, and my wife, who was in her confinement, went out of her mind. She soon departed for a better world than this, taking her poor infant with her; and a few friends, who pitied my misfortunes, advised me to emigrate, rendering me at the same time some pecuniary assistance. Well, my ill-luck has followed me: I speculated a little before quitting England, and put three chests of merchandise on board, but have not insured them for one farthing. I am really weary of being the foot-ball of Fortune, and would just as soon go to the bottom as land at Sydney with nothing left me but the coat on my back. However, I will do what I can to save poor Lady Crowler, and am just going aft again for that very purpose. For the present, then, good-bye."

## CHAPTER XV.

WITH these few words, Mr Morrison went aft, leaving me behind him to wonder at his stoicism. But I had no time to indulge in moral reflections. Just then the mate and his crew, who had been doing their best to get the long boat in order, had completed their task, and began to lower her into the sea. As I stood near them, I caught the expression on the faces of the men. They were launching her steadily and carefully, and as she rode the waves at first in a brave fashion, they looked at each other with a cheerful quiet smile, and sent down a few necessaries into her. While they were doing so, however, she gave a lurch, filled with water, and drifted off a hopeless wreck.

When this catastrophe occurred there was a deep silence—we looked into each other's faces, but no one uttered a word. The first mate, who still preserved his self-possession, turned away from the scene of the disaster as coolly as if it had been some mere mishap in ordinary seamanship. He then went forward, followed by the men. I saw them hoist what they could find handy as signals of distress; and one sailor from time to time loaded and fired off an old fowling-piece, whilst the officer stood on the forecastle sweeping the horizon with his glass. I called out to him, inquiring if he saw any signs of a vessel, and he replied that, as far as he could make it out, there was a sail in the offing. It was a long way off, however, and the sea was running so high that he doubted whether, if the people on board noticed his signals and bore down to relieve us, any boat could live in the breakers—at all events, the best thing I could do was to look to my own preservation and that of my wife, without trusting to him.

Just as I had received this information from the

officer, Mr Morrison rejoined me. He told me that he had again remonstrated with Lady Crowler, but that she was paralyzed with fear, and still unwilling to quit the poop. The fire, he said, had for the moment been got a little under amidships, but was creeping along the hold, and there was no real hope of saving the ship. As he came along, he noticed that several of the men had got a few planks together, in order to float upon them when the time of peril came, and urged me to lash my wife and child to something of the same kind. He observed, that just now I could push them off at my leisure, and cast myself into the sea after them —there was a ship in the offing, and we might be fortunate enough to reach it. It was a desperate chance, he knew, but our condition was in all other respects hopeless.

I listened to my friendly adviser with the calmness of despair, until he ceased speaking. I made him no reply, but led the way mechanically to the part of the ship where I had left Clarissa and her infant. We found my poor wife leaning against

the bulwarks, deadly pale, but calm and perfectly resigned to whatever fate might befall her. She had been praying fervently, and, like a brave woman as she was, had overcome that worst fear of all—the fear of death.

I leaned over Clarissa and spoke to her with the affection of a husband, but with decision of tone and firmness of manner which I felt to be merciful, considering the terrible condition in which we found ourselves; telling her that both our boats were swamped—that the ship could not by any possibility be kept afloat another three hours, and that Providence had sent us one last chance for the preservation of our lives, for there was a sail in the offing—that in the condition the ship was in, and with the wind against her, we were totally unable to make up to her, but that something like a raft might live in the sea for a couple of hours, strong as it was running even then—my duty, therefore, both to herself and child, was to propose to lash them to a few spars which I had gathered together, and, having put them off carefully, to swim after

them and hold on as long as my strength would allow me to keep above the surface of the water. I confessed that this was a desperate expedient, but still it was our last and only chance. Providence had ere this preserved the lives of others by means to all appearance as hopeless—at all events, I trusted that she would view the extremity of her case with the resignation of a pious frame of mind, and not hastily relinquish the only chance of life it was in her husband's power to offer.

Thus I addressed my poor wife, rousing hopes in her bosom which I did not dare to cherish in my own mind, and in some degree concealing from her the fearfulness of our position, by stating that the ship—which, if it really were in the offing, had not noticed our signals—could be reached in any raft it was in my power to put together without something like previous preparation. Mr Morrison, who stood near me, interposed a few words full of sense and feeling, endeavouring to assuage any terrors my poor wife was unable to master at the dismal prospect of intrusting herself to the wild

stormy sea around her on a few frail spars. For some minutes Clarissa made no reply ; she gazed fixedly first at the waves, wild and furious, which appeared yawning to devour her, and then at the poor infant nestling in her breast. She seemed at one time resigned to perish where she was rather than endure more misery—but she looked wistfully at her child, and then again at the bleak heaving ocean. At last she raised herself slowly off the canvass on which she had been seated, and said :—

“ As you please, Maurice—I am resigned to any fate. Whether I am preserved from this extremity of peril—as you endeavour to persuade me that I shall be—or reach a shore not of this world—but more to be desired than any country to which this ship, if all had gone well, would have conveyed us—I am perfectly satisfied, if I can only carry this little angel along with me. Look to your own safety, my dear husband, rather than to mine, and should it be your own fortune to survive this dreadful day, console yourself with the reflection that you have made a better provision for

your wife and child than that you were so desirous of earning for us in the land we were never destined to reach. You may do with me as you please."

During the few moments she had been speaking, Mr Morrison had gathered together two or three spars, and lashed them round with a coil of rope which he found near at hand. He motioned to me to be quick—perhaps from a merciful desire to allow us as little time as possible for giving vent to our feelings of anguish at what we both felt must be a lasting separation. Averting my face, I bound my dear Clarissa—whose features were as calm and resigned as those of a martyr when fastened to the stake—on to the front of the spars, and Mr Morrison then placed her infant carefully across her bosom. My wife pressed my hand, and all I held dear was launched on the wide waste of the waters. The raft, such as it was, pitched and tossed among the heavy billows ; but I saw that it rode over them, and at once threw off part of my clothes in order to follow it.

Just before essaying the leap into the sea, I

looked up and felt my face scorched by the flames, which had gathered round the mainmast and yelled and roared at its foot, whilst the mast itself appeared to be toppling over my head. I saw several sailors with hatchets in their hands cutting it away as if for life or death, and beheld it totter to and fro, with the yards and rigging hanging from it. There was a loud cry, and then a crash. I gave myself up for lost. Were my wife and poor innocent child clear of the wreck? if the mast fell on to the raft, they would be crushed to death. I strained my eyes after the raft to look, but a mist came before them. Just then I heard the voice of Mr Morrison, and felt a firm hand grasp my shoulder and drag me violently backwards. I swooned away, and lay deprived of life and motion.

I cannot state how long I continued insensible; it might be an hour, probably not so long. I was revived by the fresh breeze playing over my temples, and recollect waking up as from a dream. It was some time before I could collect my thoughts or fully

recall to mind what had occurred, and the full misery of my present position. At last I raised myself on my elbow, and when I did so, felt sick and fainting. I was seated on some canvass at the foot of the foremast; a charitable hand had rescued me from impending death, just as the mainmast was about to crush or hurl me into the sea. I did not thank it for preserving my life to endure more misery.

Day had by this time broken, but the sky was still stormy; the wind, however, had gone down considerably. I noticed that a sail had been got up on to the foremast, and that the ship was making way through the sea. Weak as I was, I managed to get on to my feet. I looked around with an anxious eye for the few spars to which I had bound my wife and child, but could recognise nothing like a raft on the face of the ocean: it was sweeping along in rolling billows as far as my sight could reach, but not a speck was on its surface. I happened to turn my head towards the eastern part of the horizon, and saw that the sun

was endeavouring to force his way through the clouds, while the wind was veering round to the north. The ship had altered her course, then, and had been bearing me—hopeless wretch as I now felt myself—away from the raft. In the extremity of my anguish I looked anxiously for Mr Morrison—in all probability his hand had saved me, and he could tell me whether or not the raft was beyond the reach of the mast when the latter went overboard. Or he might himself have been swept into the sea; for as I fainted, cries of anguish and despair rang in my ears, and I beheld several wretches carried off the deck by the wreck of the mast and hurled headlong.

I now took a careful survey of the vessel, and found that the fire had once more gained upon her. It was by this time mounting up the hatchway in one broad sheet of ruddy flame, and was reflected in its lurid splendour on the surface of the cold stormy sea. I saw the first mate and seven or eight men and boys—probably all who now survived—standing in the forecastle with their arms

folded, and I went towards them. Just as I joined the group, and before one had time to ask any questions, the captain, who was now perfectly sober, came among us, and spoke a few words to the crew. He told the men that the ship could not be kept afloat much longer, and that he was determined to go down in her, for he knew that he could not give a good account of the Jessalore to her owners. At the same time he wished those who were willing to survive the loss of the ship to look to their own safety, and that at once, for there was no time to be lost.

Just then the vessel gave a kind of violent shudder, and the sailors dispersed, crying out loudly that she was going down. I looked—I knew not from what impulse—towards the quarter-deck, and there beheld the Lady Venetia in little save her night-dress, and as cold and pale as a beautiful statue, seated near the man at the wheel, who was steering the ship steadily to the last. Mr Morrison stood by her side, and neither of them was making the slightest effort to preserve life.

The surgeon's eye just caught mine, and he smiled cheerfully, waving his hand as if to give me a parting farewell. At that moment there was a loud explosion amidships, followed by a huge volume of smoke, and with it shattered spars, fragments of canvass, and masses of blazing timber, shot up into the sky. I heard loud cries from the survivors of the crew, and beheld several of them leap into the sea.

The ship gave a heel over—a violent pitch—the water rushed into my eyes and ears, as I felt myself sucked down with her—my whole past life seemed to flash before my eyes—I was at K—Grammar School—then with my uncle, Sir William—next at Chartley—and yet my breath would be taken from me in a moment.

## CHAPTER XVI.

WHEN I revived to consciousness, some time after the fall of the mast, and discovered that every minute was bearing me away further from the few frail spars upon which Clarissa and her infant might yet be floating—looking round maybe in vain for the husband and father who had promised to make, at least, his own watery grave with theirs—I determined, in the excess of my despair, to exert no effort to save my life, but to go down with the ship. No sooner, however, did I feel myself sucked beneath the waves, than an instinctive love of life revived within my bosom, and I struck vigorously upwards.

Having always been an excellent swimmer, a few strokes sufficed to bring me to the surface ; but just as I reached it, I felt myself pulled back—a drowning sailor had clutched hold of my heel, and clung to it with all the energy of a desperate man. I knew that we must both perish unless I could free myself from the unhappy wretch, and endeavoured to shake him off ; but the poor fellow held me in a grasp of iron. My heart sickens at the recollection of my cruelty ; but in extreme peril man often becomes unfeelingly selfish. I dived in order to rid myself of the encumbrance, but the sailor, although he struggled violently, still held fast. I rose to the surface for a minute to draw breath, and then dived a second time—the seaman fell off suffocated, when, feeling myself free, I again struck out. I managed for a while to buffet the heavy waves which were dashing about wildly on all sides around, but felt that the sea was running too high to allow of my keeping myself afloat long.

I looked round on every side with an anxious

eye, straining my gaze to take in the whole scene. It was an awful sight—the heavy tossing billows were strewed with fragments of wreck, spars, casks, tattered cordage, with some three or four of the sailors who could swim still holding on to a beam here and there; but their strength became exhausted, and one by one they sank beneath the waves, uttering ere they went down, wild cries of despair. Just then a fragment of the forecastle floated past me, and I contrived to steady it whilst I crawled on to the top. It afforded me a miserable chance for my life; but I was desirous of keeping afloat, if only for half an hour, in order if possible—for the wind had now veered round again to its former point—to discern my wife and child, and at least to perish in their company.

In about fifteen minutes I had drifted clear of the wreck, and saw dancing before me on the crest of a wave a kind of raft, on which two sailors were endeavouring to support themselves. On coming up to them, I discovered that they were two

foremast men who had lashed a few planks across a hencoop and a couple of water-casks—which they had probably set afloat before the ship blew up. The sea was running so high that the two men found it impossible to keep the planks entirely above water, even with the help of a broken oar which they had managed to fish up just as they pushed off from the ship, so that the raft was about half a foot under water, and swept by every wave they breasted. As one side, however, happened to be more buoyant than the other, the men managed to keep their heads out of the sea by extending themselves along the length of it, and holding on by their two hands to the upper ledge.

Just as the fragment of the wreck to which I was myself clinging floated past them, I suddenly let it go, and leaped on to the raft—for even to cling to this would be a relief, methought. I saw that I could support myself on it in a position of comparative ease, and that with a little management it might be made to carry three persons as well as two. Whilst I was climbing on to it, one of the

men clenched his fist, and made a gesture as if to thrust me off ; but as soon as he recognised in the intruder one of the passengers of the Jessalore, that respect for his superiors on board which a sailor seldom forgets even in peril, got the better of him, and he allowed me to hold on quietly and share their miserable struggle for life.

We drifted along for some hours in a most perilous and painful position. Our limbs were stiffened by the salt water, and cramped by the posture in which we were compelled to keep them. We exchanged very few words, but looked wistfully into each other's faces, searching for any ray of hope which might brighten features already rendered rigid by despair and desperate resolution. About noon the clouds parted away, and the sun shone out over our heads warm and brightly, whilst the sea went down considerably. We took advantage of a little smooth water just to steady our raft, so that we could sit up upon it ; and the change of posture was a delightful relief to us, although our feet and ankles were still under water. Whilst I

was assisting the men to accomplish this feat, one of them relaxed his hold of the raft; but just as he was sliding into the waves, his shipmate caught him by the collar of his shirt, and dragged him on to it again.

The poor fellow, who had fainted from exhaustion, was evidently in a dying state; but we could do nothing for him except place him carefully along the planks, looking mournfully into each other's faces, as we endeavoured to settle him in an easy posture. We both knew that it was only a question of time how long we held up ourselves, and that his state would soon be our own. When I rushed into the poop after my wife and child, I had—scarce conscious of what I was doing—thrust a few biscuits into my pocket, and had taken a small bottle with brandy in it off the table. Recollecting that these were still upon my person, I managed to get the bottle out of my pocket, and handed it to my companion, who just moistened the poor fellow's mouth with its contents: the brandy revived him for a time, although he was unable to

swallow any of the biscuit. The other shook his head sorrowfully, and then returned the cordial to me ; but as he did so, he looked at it as fixedly as a miser eyes a treasure he dare not pilfer although he covets it. I made signs to him that he had better make use of it, so he took a draught out of the bottle, and ate one of the biscuits which I handed to him. I devoured the other myself, and then draining the bottle, hurled it into the sea with a kind of wild hilarity—strange contrast to the horrible position in which we found ourselves.

Scanty as this nourishment was, we both felt much refreshed by it, and began to exchange a few words ; but the man had no information to give which could assuage my anguish. He told me that he had seen the first mate struggling with the waves—battling hard for his life before he sank, but never caught sight of the captain. Mr Morrison also and Lady Crowler, had no doubt gone down with the ship, and he could afford me no information respecting them.

As long as we were able to speak to each other

now and then, it kept our spirits up wonderfully, but we soon found ourselves too much exhausted to exchange a word. I sat still on the raft, occasionally casting my eyes round with a searching gaze; but we had drifted clear of all traces of the wreck, and there was nothing on the surface of the waves which any self-delusion could transform into the few frail planks to which I had intrusted Clarissa. A bitter sickening feeling stole over my heart; for I told myself that my wife and child were long ere this numbered with the dead, and that my own weary life was no longer worth preserving.

Towards afternoon the wind freshened again, and the few miserable planks between us and death began to be tossed about by the waves. Just as the sun dipt beneath the billows, he cast a deep red glow over the surface of the ocean as it rocked to and fro, and we discerned, or thought we discerned, a white sail in the centre of the flash of crimson light. An indescribable feeling came over us—I grew frantic with excite-

ment, whilst my companion in distress worked at the oar with the energy of a boat's crew in his single arm. I contrived, weak as I was, to stagger on to my feet, and tearing the shirt off my back, waved it in a frenzy of excitement over my head ; but the light died away, and the ship (if ship it were) vanished in the gray tints of the evening ; so we cast ourselves down again on to the raft, looking and feeling more hopeless even than before.

We were soon, however, roused from our melancholy trance by a deep long-drawn sigh, and looking round discovered that our poor comrade the sailor, who had fainted, had suddenly given up the ghost, and was free from his earthly cares and sufferings. His shipmate looked at him for a moment, whilst the tears streamed down his own weather-beaten cheeks, and then, taking the corpse up in his arms as tenderly as if it had been his own child, committed it with a kind of quiet respect to the waves. It danced about on the crest of a billow, which was careering like a wild racer astern of us, and was soon out of view ; but as long

as the light enabled us to do so we looked after it, and then composed our stiffened limbs once more on to the raft.

Soon after this melancholy incident, a kind of weariness stole over my senses, and I fell into a stupor. It was not sleep, for I was partly conscious of making an effort now and then to steady myself on the raft; but I lost all perception of anything beyond it. I was roused at last by a feeling of increasing want of security, and found that the billows were surging round us, whilst the wind was growing to a squall, and that I must once more hold on by the edge of the raft. The moon was just struggling through a dense cloud, and by her wan uncertain light I noticed that the surviving sailor had already stretched himself along the planks in the same position as that in which I had first seen him. I spoke to the man, but he returned me no answer, and I was too weak myself to address him again. In about half an hour's time I felt a rough hand grasp mine, whilst the poor fellow forced a few parting words out of his lips.

“Farewell, shipmate!” gasped the man. “I am off on my long cruise. If you ever come into port at Ilfracombe, ask for the old mother of George Polder. Tell her that her son was a good seaman, and stuck to his ship while her beams held together. They won’t be hard on a poor fellow where I am bound to—so don’t take it to heart. Farewell, shipmate, and God bless you!”

With these words the dying sailor relaxed his hold, and sank under the waves without a struggle.

I was now alone upon the raft, with the melancholy conviction impressed upon my mind that my preservation depended for the future on my own failing strength and drooping courage. I felt as weak as an infant, and could not have held on to the raft in the same posture for another half-hour. Providentially the gale died away once more, and the sea, instead of chopping about as it had done, began to run in a long heavy swell; and there being no one but myself upon the raft, I was enabled to keep it in a horizontal position on the surface of the water, by now and then

shifting from one side to the other ; kneeling down and sitting up by turns—a variation of posture accompanied by a feeling of luxurious relief, although my feet were all the while immersed in the sea.

The necessity of making these efforts had the effect of nerving my mind, and I regained the full possession of my senses, together with perfect control over them. I remember distinctly holding a long argument with myself, and becoming wholly absorbed in it. I thought of that long dreary night—long and dreary beyond all power of expression—and questioned myself as to whether it was worth while to live any longer ; a voice within seemed to reply, that death would single me out at last, and that I had better close with him like a bold man and get free from all this misery. Just then the moon parted the clouds from before her face, as if putting back a sable curtain, and a calm radiance quivered on the crests of the heaving billows ; whilst the thought of my wife and child, and a kind of trust in Providence, as if she was preserving them for me in some

unseen haven of refuge, beamed upon my mind. I reasoned with myself that it was my duty to cling to existence for their sake, if not for my own, and thought that I might manage to live for yet another day—and after that I would go to rest, with the surging waters for my pillow, and the rough voice of the wind the lullaby singing me to sleep.

That dismal, that awful night at length wore away: the moon began to pale, and an angry blush in the east told that the sun was rising over the ocean. The monarch came forth from his chamber with eager steps, darting a purple glory around him as he uprose, and appearing to walk on the visible verge of the waters. I eyed the fiery orb as if beholding in it the face of one I knew powerful to aid, and mentally asked if he brought me an assurance of rescue; but he mounted higher and higher, and appeared to forget me altogether, for he revealed no speck of a sail the wide horizon round. Hope now gradually died away in my breast to the last spark—and yet I would not

break faith with myself or die if I could keep death off, because I had promised to outlive that day.

Thus I floated on hour after hour—my stiffened limbs folded beneath my body and my head sunk down upon my breast—the mere sport of the waves. All of a sudden I felt a numbness creeping along my spine and then stealing over the eyeballs, whilst a deadly sickness seized on the chest, and my breath came with difficulty. I thought that I was dying, and roused myself to make one last despairing sweep of the horizon before succumbing quietly to my fate. To my surprise, I recognised what was evidently land—and that at no great distance off—together with the sails of vessels gliding along the horizon all around me. I struggled violently to support myself on my feet, and in about a quarter of an hour found myself in the midst of them. Some were scudding away before a brisk wind with every wing outspread, as if bound on a long and distant flight, whilst others kept on the tack, evidently making for some harbour.

My heart rose to my mouth at the welcome sight. I leaped and danced on the raft like a maniac, making the most violent gesticulations and signals. To my joy the nearest ship perceived them—she altered her tack, and bore down towards me. I could hear the whistle and see the sails swing round just as a boat was lowered over her side. In a few minutes more the raft was beating about near the boat, as if bounding with exultation, and yet coyly refusing to be caught. At last two sailors leaned over the side, and taking me up in their arms, lifted me carefully into their craft, and laid me down at the bottom of it. I was saved, but had no strength left to thank my kind preservers, for I fainted away immediately.

## CHAPTER XVII.

I WAS too much exhausted for some time after my rescue to inquire what friendly hands had saved me from a watery grave. When sufficiently recovered to ask a few questions of the rough but good-natured sailor who acted as my nurse, I learned that I was on board the schooner "Colonial" of Hobart Town, bound on her outward voyage to Port-Jackson. On the ship's anchoring in Sydney Cove, I was just able to crawl on shore to make a deposition concerning the loss of the Jessalore, and then betook myself to the hospital, where a nervous fever—the result of my anguish of mind and long agony on the raft—brought me

down to the verge of the grave. My unfortunate condition excited a great deal of commiseration among the kind-hearted inhabitants of the Australian metropolis, and offers of assistance poured in upon me from all sides before I was sufficiently recovered to avail myself of anything of the kind ; but no one dared to pledge himself to restore Clarissa and my child to the bereaved husband and father, and on other offers of assistance I set little value.

It is not my intention to go into the history of my residence in Australia in anything like a circumstantial manner. It was not an eventful one ; and no pictures of southern life with which it might be in my power to furnish the reader would in these stirring times excite much interest. The whole of my sojourn in the Colonies appears to myself one dreary uneasy dream—a dream in which two long-lost forms rose to my memory whenever I could forget the outer world, but flitted from it if recalled by some engrossing care—for such did I create as an employment for my un-

easy thoughts—to the business of those with whom I compelled myself to enter into intercourse.

But to return to my narrative. My career during the time I resided in Australia was a reflection of my own unhappy state of mind throughout the period. There was no rest for the weary feet—for the heart surrounded by fire—and I wandered like a perturbed spirit in dry places, seeking rest but finding none. At first I made Sydney, which was then the very heart and pulse of the Colonies, my home, so as to catch every breath of intelligence concerning the loss of the Jessalore which might happen to stray in that direction. Kind and charitable persons rendered me every assistance in their power; as who would not to a bereaved husband seeking his wife and child? but yet, after haunting all the government-offices and vice-consuls' establishments in the port, I was compelled to confess that the result of my exertions was a mere blank. Occasionally a half-whisper of intelligence would just flutter in my ear, but died away again immediately.

As long as it was in my power to indulge in any shadow of hope, however faint, I could and did rest in a state of comparative composure; but the moment the conviction flashed upon my mind that every grain of information in Sydney was exhausted, the place became hateful to me, and I rushed off to Hobart Town.

In this youthful capital I lingered month after month; homeward and outward bound ships weighed anchor or came into port, but none brought any tidings of the Jessalore or persons saved from the wreck. I boarded everything that could be called a vessel the moment the pilot put off, and called the captain's attention to the fact that I had been wrecked in the Jessalore, and was frantic from lack of intelligence concerning my wife and child. The inhabitants of Van Diemen's Land took a kindly interest in my sad story, and even the Governor favoured me with an interview, at the close of which he promised to cause inquiries to be made at Bombay and other ports where a vessel might have put in and landed any survivors of the wreck. The

inquiries were made, but nothing came of them. My good friends endeavoured to keep up my spirits, and advised me by all means to persevere in my inquiries ; but I could see by the expression of their countenances when I alluded to the matter—for I talked of nothing else—that in their hearts they reckoned my case hopeless. They represented to me, what was true enough—that if I intended to prosecute my inquiries, the best place of permanent residence I could select would be Sydney, being, as it then was, the only centre of general intelligence in our part of the world ; so, after lingering a few months longer in Hobart Town, I acted upon their advice, and took a passage back to Port-Jackson in my old friend the Colonial. As soon as I landed, the anguish of disappointment again threw me on to a sick-bed, and my life was despaired of for several weeks.

On recovering—for to my sorrow I did recover—I felt it useless to prosecute these inquiries in a systematic manner any longer. I did not relinquish hope altogether—I could not have lived

long after I had done so : but it was plain that nothing save a miracle could ever restore my wife and child ; yet it was my duty to live in hope. In the meantime I must find some engrossing pursuit or occupation ; for to continue a prey to my own dejected thoughts year after year was impossible.

After many fits of irresolution, I made up my mind, and sought refuge, as many an unhappy wretch has done before me, in the multitudinous cares of business. I plunged into the hurry and speculation of a vigorous young colony, and copied the stirring, striving men about me, doing even as they did, but not with their greed for lucre. I bought and sold land, built houses and speculated in them, took shares in coasters and whalers, and pretended to be doing my best to become a colonial magnate. To all outward appearance I transformed myself into the very model of an energetic, far-sighted merchant, who was always at his post. I corresponded with accuracy and despatch, and posted up my books every month, balancing them to the

fraction of a farthing. Yet to my wide-awake neighbours I was a puzzle after all, for they soon discovered that I took little care to grow rich ; and if I made a couple of thousands by one hazardous enterprise, threw them away upon another.

As to identifying myself in the slightest degree with the little world around me, my gorge rose at the very notion. No : I was a mere pilgrim loitering on the road that others were travelling for business or pleasure, and after resting under this or that shady hedge-row, I just took up my wallet again, and went on my way with a deep-drawn sigh. My history was well known in Sydney, and when people spoke of the wreck of the Jessalore, they shook their heads doubtfully, remarking that his dreadful loss had in some degree disordered poor Mr Elvington's mind ; so they left me to my own ways, and contented themselves with buying and selling, and other business transactions, with a man who they considered had turned out a first-rate merchant.

At one period my affairs in Sydney were in a

state of great worldly prosperity, and I then discharged a few claims in England which I looked upon as debts of honour. I remitted to Mrs Saunders, with whom I kept up a constant correspondence—for somehow or other it was a great relief to me to write to her about my poor wife—the sum of one hundred and fifty pounds, which I requested her to forward to Mrs Martha Elvington. She did so, and I received in due course the stamped receipt of that punctual lady, written in a grim old-fashioned hand, but unaccompanied by one line of condolence for my dreadful loss; concerning which, perhaps, Mrs Saunders had never given her any information. As I read the receipt, every letter caused me to shudder—it seemed written in blood: this miserable money alone had supplied me with the means of carrying out my frantic resolution!!

I wrote also about the same time to Messrs Gently and Sadgrove, informing them that things had taken a prosperous turn with me, and of my desire to ascertain the amount in which I was in-

debted to their firm. About twelve months afterwards, a small parcel reached me by the mail, and on opening it, I found a long account, which, after all, came to no great sum. I merely glanced at the total, and then remitted the amount through the Australian Bank, receiving in a few months afterwards an acknowledgment in the handwriting of Mr Gently.

The worthy solicitor had evidently grown infirm since I had last seen him, for his writing was tremulous, and he hazarded a very senile suggestion as to the expediency of his applying once more to the authorities at Florence respecting my uncle's affairs; a lapse of judgment of which he would never have been guilty in the palmy days of his professional intellect. Indeed, he informed me in his letter that he was in ill health, and suffered from low spirits, occasioned by the death of poor Mrs Gently, whom he had recently lost; the blow, he said, had shaken him terribly. He added, that his third daughter, Amelia, had just married away from him, and that he was

leading rather a solitary life with his daughter Mary-Ann, in the old house at Highgate-rise.

Mr Gently went on to say, 'that he often thought over the pleasant old times when I was in the habit of walking up to his villa in the cool of the fine summer evenings, and going through Cockroach and Salmon—a decision the legal beauty of which made a greater impression upon him every day—and other leading cases with him in the little study. He also gave it as his opinion, that it was a great pity I had not availed myself of my legal acquirements, of which he thought highly, to take the lead of the Australian bar—for acute lawyers were sadly wanting in these degenerate days; when even the Judges—not excepting that sound man, Mr Justice Bellows—did not rule so strictly as they were in the habit of doing when he, Mr Gently, was an articled clerk. However, he observed Highgate-rise was an altered place now, and, notwithstanding all his happy recollections of the past, he could not be selfish enough to wish me to be sitting there, as he was at that very

time, looking every now and then out at the window at poor Mrs Gently's flower-beds and standard-roses, feeling that he could never watch her watering them any more. Mr Gently brought this kind letter (which by its quiet pathos almost caused tears to start into my eyes) to a close by congratulating me warmly on what he was pleased to term the upright manner in which I had discharged my obligation to him, and concluded by wishing me a continuance of the prosperity I had at last discovered on the other side of the Equator.

After I had been a resident in Sydney upwards of six years, and had acquired the honourable reputation of an honest and thriving colonist, I took, all of a sudden, the resolution of winding up my business affairs there, and starting off to Adelaide. People, of course, shook their heads more than ever when they heard of my intended departure, but thought it useless to remonstrate with a man whose state of mind was as unsettled as they considered mine ; so they did me the

honour of inviting me to a grand farewell dinner. I sat in a kind of melancholy trance during the whole of the entertainment, but read a report of the proceedings in the *Herald* of the following morning; where I found that the chairman proposed my health as his respected fellow-colonist, and enlarged with due amplification on my commercial integrity; and that a thriving auctioneer, who was the established wit of George Street, seconded the proposal in a humorous speech, in which he accused me of running away to Adelaide in quest of a wife, and wondered why none of the rising young “gum-suckers” of New South Wales happened to be to my fancy.

I was indeed turning my weary steps towards Adelaide in search of a wife; although not in the sense insinuated by my friend’s unlucky allusion. On reaching that colony, however, I did not find one single breath of intelligence stirring which could relieve my anxiety. Matters are soon forgotten in a young state of society; the wreck of the Jessalore was a thing of the past, and people no longer cared

to recognise in the enterprising merchant before them the disconsolate survivor of her crew and passengers. The colonists of South Australia mistook my errand entirely; they took me for a pushing far-sighted man, and hailed my arrival as an event which furnished them with a desirable addition to their expanding commercial circle.

One day when I happened to be down at Port-Adelaide on business, I found a small brig loading for the infant city of Auckland, and instantly took my passage by her. The thought struck me that it was my duty not to leave one nook in the Southern Hemisphere unsearched; but the good folks of "Little Adelaide" merely saw in this strange step the energy of a pushing trader. They relished my enterprise—made consignments by the same vessel, and crowded commissions upon my books, so that in one way and another the voyage paid me handsomely. But about this I was totally indifferent, and returned at the close of my voyage in a state of dejection. I had searched every valley and bay in New Zealand—every nook and secluded

hiding-place, but Clarissa and her child were not found nestled in the recesses of any one of them.

On my return to South Australia, I found the whole of our little community out of its senses at the discovery of the Burra-burra Copper-mines, and took shares in them myself, but had the misfortune to choose the wrong company. However this did not break my heart; I had again found a relief for my misery in gambling in land-shares, and every other possible investment; and during the whirl and excitement of the season of speculation now and then forgot my own spectre-haunted existence. A crash took place in Adelaide even before people expected it, and the victims of their own greediness were thrown off the ladder one after another. Some great houses disappeared altogether: that is to say, their principals decamped with other people's money; but Elvington and Company lighted on what were thought to be their feet, for after paying my obligations in full, I had ninety pounds left wherewith to begin the world again.

The people at Adelaide had a very friendly feeling towards me, and the leading men of business offered to come forward to any amount if I would only stay amongst them ; but I took my ruin with a sang-froid that astonished them. I just told my neighbours that I was on the eve of removing to Melbourne in the company of two other merchants who had been as lucky as myself, and that I wished them a very good-bye. As we were sailing along the coast, I wondered I had never taken a look at that part of our continent before, and felt like a man who had been throwing away valuable time. When we landed and were thrown entirely on our own resources, my two companions grew very dismal, and were inclined to give up altogether ; but I never felt less dejected in my life. I invited them to dinner, and when it was over compelled them to accompany me to the theatre, where we sat out the performance and laughed heartily.

The next morning I took a stroll down Collins Street, and finding a little house unlet which hit

my fancy, hired it, with the intention of opening an agency-office, paying a month's rent in advance. I thought a business of that description would afford me the best means of prosecuting my inquiries after my wife and child; for to that cardinal point all my efforts tended. To my own surprise, a kind of reputation which I had acquired all over Australia had travelled to Melbourne before me, and the very first week my office was opened half the people in the city crowded into it. Captains and merchants from all parts of the world walked in and out of my counting-house throughout the day, and were rather surprised when I interrupted their long drowsy yarns concerning "the William and Betsy," or "Maori" of Wellington, by suddenly rousing myself from a reverie and asking them eagerly if anything had ever been heard of the people who were supposed to have gone down in the Jessalore. However they shook their heads civilly, and confessed that they had either never heard of the wreck or had forgotten it; but

promised that when they were knocking about at different ports they would make inquiries, and acquaint me with the result of them the next time they came my way.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

ABOUT the time that the colony of Victoria was ringing from one end to the other with the excitement caused by the discovery of her wonderful auriferous treasures, I received a letter which induced me to turn my wandering footsteps once more towards the Old World. It came from my friend Mrs Saunders, and was as follows :—

HONNERED SIR,—I write this, trusting it finds you in good helth as it leaves me at pressent, although tired out and in bad spirruts with

Saunders having goat in his feet this three weaks last Satterday. I am sory to tell you unplessent newes, Mr Elvington; but we ought all to be perpared for our last ends, esphessully the poor deseased who had wymmyssicull nosions put into her hedde when young, pore thing, by sociables and other infiddles—if they was burnt at Charing Crosse as they used to was, pore silly wimmen, would not be delewded. Your Ant, Sir, Mrs Martha, was found a copse in her elber chare, having dyed suddinly. She left a Will, to which, Sir, you are apponted Executioner, and a considderable amount of property, being in the perfect possesshun of her sensis, at eighty-fore year of age.

On the pore lady's suddin deth, Saunders, who sends his dewty, went down to the North and took upon hisself to give her Chrystshun Byrrial, which was done for the best, and dersposed of her nasty bokes, for which he holds hisself accounterble; but Mr Elvington, we cannot take further steps here without your pressence or written orthornity,

which may not be worth the voyage, but please write and inform

Your obedient humble Servent,

SUSANNA SAUNDERS.

Shall I confess the truth—the receipt of this letter delighted me beyond measure—not that I valued any property I might inherit from the poor old lady, but for the simple reason that it afforded me an excuse to myself for again becoming a wanderer. I could return to Europe, and cajole myself with the persuasion that pressing business called me thither. On reaching London, I would search it through and through, and then take in turn every large seaport-town in England and on the Continent, in order to pursue my inquiries concerning the long-lost Clarissa and her child. I lost no time, then, in explaining to my friends in Melbourne that the death of my nearest relation compelled me to return to England; and, having wound up my affairs, took a passage in a clipper which was advertised to make a quick run home

round the Horn. There was some little risk in making such a low latitude in the winter of the Southern World ; but since I did not in reality set on my life the value of a pin's fee, I thought anything preferable to retracing my steps round the Cape, and crossing the Equator by a track full of bitter memories and intolerable regrets : though what path of the ocean or spot of dry land was free from them for one who carried about within his own breast an accusing angel—the still small voice of an angry conscience ?

Our homeward passage was as rough as I expected it to be. We were in the ice for some days, and sprang a leak about a week after leaving Staten Island behind us, so that it was with some risk and difficulty we bore up for Pernambuco. We reached Brazil, however, and putting the ship into dock, were compelled to take ourselves on shore whilst the cargo was discharged and her hull set to rights. To the dismay of my fellow-passengers, we found the yellow-fever raging at Pernambuco amongst the negroes and Creoles, and

several of our people caught the infection and died in the hospital. Yes, healthy and hopeful men—men in the prime of life, who had suddenly grown rich beyond their wildest dreams, and were returning to England to greet fathers and sisters or those still dearer to them—these men, clinging to life to the last with a grasp that would not let it go, caught the infection, and fell before it as if struck with a poisonous blast—whilst I bore a charmed life, and walked without concern in the very footsteps of the pestilence, hunting his shadow, and yet he fled before me like a fugitive.

As soon as I landed at Liverpool, I hastened up to London, and went immediately to the residence of Mr and Mrs Saunders, both of whom I found as warm-hearted as ever, although advancing years had wrought their work upon the worthy couple. Our first meeting was a dreadful one ; for the injudicious sympathy of the good woman, who compelled me to give her a detailed account of all the circumstances accompanying the loss of Clarissa and her infant, caused my heart to bleed afresh.

However, fortunately business at once engrossed my attention: time had been lost, and I was compelled to look into the affairs of the deceased Mrs Elvington the very morning after I landed.

It appeared that, one way and another, I should come into possession of something under ten thousand pounds—a handsome inheritance; but falling to me as it did too late, it only drove me frantic. The first sum I received—about a thousand pounds in notes and gold—I spread out upon a table, and the glittering coin appeared to be on fire and scorch my eyeballs. I apostrophized the heap of money as something endowed with life, and possessing a conscience to be wrung—asking why it had sought me out in my misery—sought out a wretch with a heart so torn and hopes so shattered, that all the treasures of California would lie unheeded at his feet? Or was it, after all, but an enemy in the guise of a friend, who put on an affectation of civility to insult my broken spirit in its unspeakable anguish? I exclaimed that there

was a time and tide in my own life, as in that of any other unfortunate, when the wind seemed inclined to settle down fairly with me—when the receipt of only a fourth part of a sum like that would have reconciled my discontented mind to its prospects in my own country, and prevented me from hurrying my poor unhappy wife and innocent child to a watery grave. But of what avail was fortune to me now? Could the ears of the two martyrs of my own selfish pride, far down as they were at the bottom of the deep, catch the ring of the shower of gold pouring into my lap? Could I take the money in my hand and stand over the deaf billows in order to bargain with them for a release of their two prisoners, if I threw it into their ravenous maw?

Thus—and much more in the same wild frenzied manner—did I run on, clenching my teeth and wringing my hands, until at last I rushed, half-suffocated with passion, out of the room, and from the room to the street; leaving the door of the house open, and the vile dross on the table at the

mercy of the first vagrant who might choose to prowl into the passage and sweep the heap of coin into his tattered rags. But when I returned in the afternoon, it was still there. I gave vent to a deep sigh as I cleared it off the table and placed it in a place of security; saying to myself, as I turned the key in the lock of the safe, that life was a sick man's dream, and it was a good thing for him when he woke up from it.

It was with feelings akin to these that I became the possessor of what so many sell their souls to obtain—a large sum of money; but money was nothing to me now. However, the kind intention of the whimsical old relative who bequeathed it was the same, and I was pleased, as I went over a large assortment of papers which she left behind her, to discover that I could respect her memory. I lighted upon several memoranda of her many munificent charities, and learned from them that the old lady had not limited her "universal benevolence" to the narrow circle of a few cunning hangers-on, who might pretend to share

in her peculiar opinions. Within her last Will and Testament—which was formal enough, merely bequeathing the whole of her property to me in the usual legal phraseology—I found a singular Document in her own grim handwriting. It was entitled “ Reasons for bequeathing my Estate to my Great-nephew Maurice Elvington,” and one part of it ran thus:—

“ When I follow the so-called Rules of Succession established in a state of Society, which, based as it is on Competitive Principles and the existing Social Relation of the Sexes, is in my opinion irrational and absurd, I am not to be understood as advocating the Tyranny of Priestcraft, the Hypocrisy of Law, the Crimes of Cabinets, or the Pollution of an Indissoluble Tie of Matrimony. In acting in what I confess is not altogether a Philosophical Manner, I merely follow the example of private submission to the general state of things round me, set by my excellent friend, the deceased Mr Godwin; who urged Mr Shelley to contract the Engagement of Matrimony

out of Submission to the Laws of his Country, although he did not on abstract grounds approve of Undue Subserviency to the absurd Exigencies of Custom.

“ When, then, I commit what I do not (I confess) consider the altogether Allowable Act of taking and disposing of what I have certainly been absurd enough to treat during my lifetime as my own Share of the Fruits of the Earth out of the Common Stock, I can only make choice between my niece the Countess de Saint Ange, and my Grand-nephew Maurice Elvington. The former relation was brought up under my own eye in the Principles of the calumniated Philanthropist Rousseau, but has apostatized from them, and become an accomplice in the Vile Aristocratic Conspiracy under which Europe lies groaning. Maurice Elvington, on the other hand, has been the unfortunate and innocent Victim of what are misnamed the Laws of his Native Country, but has had the energy to rise superior to a bad education. He supported himself in this country by his own ex-

ertions for several years, married a decent young woman from the midst of the Disfranchised Working Classes, and sought a home in a New World and Virgin Soil, where he could contemplate the perfections of the Noble Savage, and eat his bread far from the Cold Shade of a Worn-out Aristocracy, the Crafts of Priests, and the Oppressions of Kings. I have therefore selected him as the depositary of my little Possessions, trusting that he will receive the gift in a Philosophical Temper, and, for the sake of the memory of her who bequeathed them, be careful to transmit them to his own Descendants."

Well, the best and most consistent of human natures is only the result of a fair balance of opposing inconsistencies after all. This poor kind-hearted old Jacobin lost the poise of her judgment at the commencement of her life, so it is not to be wondered at that she should sing this strange palinode at the end of it. One can fancy her sitting in her blind little library, having the portrait of Mr Godwin over the mantelpiece, and

the bust of Rousseau on the top of the mahogany bookcase, with volumes of Voltaire, Condorcet, and Owen, littered about the room, all the time she was so carefully bequeathing her share of the common Stock and the Fruits of the Earth to Maurice Elvington, her nearest male relation.

Yet there was no humbug about the old lady—she did believe in these principles of hers as something to speculate concerning, and loved, no doubt, to contemplate them as carried through after her decease with a certain amount of what was to her mere theatrical bloodshed and dramatic slaughter. She had passed her own existence quietly in the present irrational system of society, and could not exactly be anxious to be put out of her quiet methodical path during her lifetime by even such a trifling philosophical experiment as a total dissolution of society. To sow the wind and leave the next generation to reap the whirlwind, is the employment of many men—philosophers, poets, emperors, and philanthropists; and since Mrs Elvington never published a quarto upon her little

divergences of opinion, or went about lecturing to our English helots on subjects they could not possibly comprehend, she was less mischievous than many brighter geniuses of her class.

## CHAPTER XIX.

THE task of winding up Mrs Elvington's affairs did not engross my time so entirely as to leave me no leisure for prosecuting the search which had long become the serious business of my life. In reality I did not feel the slightest assurance that I should ever recover my wife and child; but although the hope of learning their fate had long become a mere delusion, the habit of cherishing it remained behind, and I could not have freed myself from it if I had been desirous of doing so. I availed myself, therefore, of my compulsory residence in London to haunt the docks, Lloyd's rooms, commercial coffee-houses, and every other place where

I was likely to tempt a merchant or captain into conversation ; and after we had talked a while about the gold discoveries or the rebellion in China, I would just contrive to edge in a word concerning the loss of the Jessalore, asking my companion if he really thought that every soul save myself had gone down in her. Since no one recollects even the name of the ship, the persons in the habit of frequenting the different coffee-houses began to stare at the pertinacity of my inquiries, and set me down as a harmless man of decayed intellect, afflicted with monomania on a particular subject.

One morning when I had found my way to America Square, and was returning to the city, I felt a sudden attack of a painful disorder to which I was rather subject. I had a prescription of Mr Foggerton's by me, which I had saved by a mere chance when wrecked in the Jessalore, and always carried about on my person. Wishing, then, to have it made up, I looked on both sides of the street as I walked along for a chemist's shop, and at last lighted on one called the "Branch

College of Hygiène," which I thought would answer the purpose. As I went in at the door, I saw behind the counter a learned-looking gentleman grinding away with intense vigour at the marble mortar, and handed him the prescription. The chemist continued working at the pestle for a few minutes before he thought fit to look up ; but when he did so, the hand of time, and perhaps reckless over-reading, had not so sunken his eyes into his head and taken the hair off the top of it, but that I was enabled to call to mind the once lively features of my old landlord, Mr Foggerton. I was in all probability as much altered myself, for my medical friend did not recognise me ; but when he saw a prescription in his own handwriting placed before him, he gave a start which caused every bottle to rattle in the shop, and I then held out my hand and reproached him for not recollecting Maurice Elvington.

Mr Foggerton in the old familiar times would have seized my hand with intense fervour and half-dislocated the wrist, whilst he indulged in

such curiosities of expression as, “By jingo!” “Hurrah, old fellow!” and so on; but “a change had apparently come over the spirit of his dream,” and he looked both careworn and serious—at all events, in no small degree ashamed at being discovered behind a counter. At last he said, in a grave and subdued voice:—

“Ah, Mr Elvington, I am happy to meet you again—I am glad to see the face of an old friend under any circumstances. I would have given you the same cordial welcome had you accosted me at a time when I might have been driving behind a pair of spanking grays, taking professional notes of the most interesting cases, with both the carriage windows down, as now when I am meditating the unconscious experiment of ascertaining whether skate-oil is a satisfactory substitute for cod-liver in the case of a strumous child. The very sight of you, Mr Elvington, brings back to my recollection the old times when I used to dream about the Hunterian Orations and cutting out Sir Benjamin in Burlington Street: and see what my day-dreams

have ended in! Of course, you twig everything, and it will save me the pain of telling you a dismal story.

“ Well, Mr Foggerton,” I replied, anxious to hearten the poor man up a little, “ I twig, as you call it, something, and must express my regret that your professional struggles have met with no better appreciation and reward, especially those of an M.D., for such I suppose is now your status. But you are such a clever fellow, after all, that I should not be surprised at hearing that you had discovered some short cut to prosperity when you least expected it yourself.”

“ You are very kind, Mr Elvington,” answered my old landlord, with a sorry shake of his head ; “ but I have taken the short cut you allude to, through the University of Edinburgh, and you see where it has landed me. I confess that had I been disposed in the palmy days of my health and spirits to have risked my professional standing, I was on the scent of one or two of these same short cuts, and might by this time have been a

man of great fortune. If I had taken up the water-cure for instance, when it first crossed over to England, I might at this very moment have had twenty old gentlemen wrapt up in damp sheets, and fifty middle-aged ladies compelled to eat mutton chops and give up tight lacing, boarded in some large establishment or other at the weekly sum of five guineas a-head. But I stuck to the legitimate walks of my profession, and have walked behind a counter as the reward of my professional spirit. However it is useless to regret the past, and the best thing I can do at present is to make up the prescription with what genuine drugs I can muster, and send an old friend about his business."

"As you please," was my answer, "but not until I have made an inquiry after my landlady. I have many pleasant recollections of Mrs Foggerton, and trust that she is well and happy."

"Mrs Foggerton," said the husband, looking rather sheepish, "was in good health and as happy as she can be under the circumstances when I last heard from her. She is not residing

with me at present, but we are very punctual in communicating with each other by letter. Ah! Elvington, you know how attached I am and was to my gentle sylph-like wife, and what sacrifices I made in my own purse and person to enable her to maintain the lady-like position in which Mrs Hicks, her mother, had brought her up. But when I reflect seriously on my false start in life, I often think it would have been a happy thing for myself and Maria if we had never fallen in each other's way."

"Well, Mr Foggerton," I replied, "one cannot have everything as one pleases, even in matrimony. Perhaps you and Mrs Foggerton were not well matched, but you were very fond of each other, and no doubt are so to this very day."

"A person like myself," responded the husband, sadly, "devoted to his profession, and determined to stick to it, could not have failed of success had things gone commonly well with him. I had very little ready-money you know, and had my wife brought me only a thousand pounds, it would have

prevented one from being driven from house and home by tax-gatherers and dunning tradespeople. Now, Mrs Foggerton brought me no fortune except the treasure of herself, her lady-like habits and genteel pretensions."

"She had been brought up badly, I admit," was my answer, "but your wife did her best, and she improved very much even in the few months I resided under your roof."

"There was room for improvement," said Mr Foggerton, shaking his head again, and brightening up a little as one of his old flows of ideas rushed in upon him—"Mrs Foggerton had been taught something, I admit, but it was not of the right sort. She could paint bell-pulls upon velvet, manufacture moss and alum baskets, and copy parish-churches in card-board, and might therefore have gained her living in a fancy repository. Mrs Foggerton sang 'Kathleen Mavourneen,' 'Beautiful Venice,' and the second part in Bishop's glee of 'As it fell upon a day ;' so in an arcade at Margate or Hastings she might have helped an

industrious husband on in the world by her vocal accomplishments. Maria had read through two or three circulating libraries, and had the gossip of Hackney and De Beauvoir Town, together with the names of the gentlemen who lived in all the large houses on Stamford Hill, at her fingers' ends ; but if a poor woman rang at the surgery-bell and left a message for her husband, she invariably delivered it wrong. She could trim up a bonnet when she pleased ; but as she knew nothing of cooking, and could never learn how to dress a joint, I sometimes dined at a tavern, as you well know. In short, had poor Mrs Foggerton's relations taught her the four simple rules of arithmetic, the tradesmen—who I am sorry to say got paid after all—would not have made the slight mistake of adding up pence for shillings, and thus increasing the sum total of our liabilities every quarter-day to an alarming amount. However, these retrospections are useless, and in order not to waste more of your time, I will at once concoct the prescription."

Notwithstanding this promise, my old landlord wasted a little more time by making long pauses whenever he took a fresh jar or vial from the shelves, and detailing to me in the interval his history since we lost sight of each other. From the account Mr Foggerton gave of himself, it appeared that he read at Edinburgh with great credit and success; but unfortunately had the curiosity to read the will of the deceased Mr Hicks during a slight pause in his studies. He discovered, to his surprise, that this document gave him control over his wife's reversion in the old gentleman's property, such as it was—and, of course, sold it instantly. Armed with the ready cash, he paid off a few debts in Scotland, took his M. D. degree, and hired the largest house he could find unlet in the thriving provincial capital of Exeter, pretending to establish himself there as a local physician. He seems to have lived very happily with Mrs Foggerton during his residence in Devonshire, for the lady made many genteel friends, and her husband acquired a high reputation as a retired

medical gentleman of good fortune and great scientific acquirements, who was not desirous of practising. When their money came to an end, the couple were sold up, and the loving husband posted his dear Maria home to her mother and sister in a fit of desperation. Foggerton had since then been scamping about for five or six years, and was at the present time keeping open the shop of a bankrupt druggist until a purchaser could be found for it. When this event took place, he expected, he told me, to obtain a berth in the Crimea in some subordinate medical post, and at the conclusion of a peace had some idea of finding his way to Teheran, in order to obtain the appointment of house-surgeon to the Harem of the Shah of Persia, or retiring to the coast of Africa and picking up a practice among the Ashantees. Anything, he said, was better than starvation.

My medicine was at last made up, and when I swallowed it, took such a magical effect upon my system that I thought it best to get home before a relapse might deprive me of the power of doing so.

I gave my old landlord a warm shake by the hand, and parted from him with a feeling of charity mingled with pity. I had not managed my own career in life too well and wisely—and although I knew Mr Foggerton's misfortunes were the inevitable result of his restless and unsteady temper, yet I asked myself why this poor man had been sent into the world with talent enough to keep his character in unstable equilibrium for life, but not sufficiently splendid to turn him into a Davy, Faraday, or Owen?

## CHAPTER XX.

AMONG the different places of commercial resort in which I was in the habit of spending an hour or two when in the city—my thoughts still full of the one engrossing subject—was a coffee-house named the Cocoa Tree. It stood in a court near the Royal Exchange, and was much frequented by shipowners and foreign agents. The proprietor took in most of the colonial papers, and I was accustomed to take my seat in the midst of the natives of all climates and regions, in order to wade through the Sydney Herald, Melbourne

Argus, Bombay Times, or any other newspaper which happened to be disengaged, with a dogged resolution, which, although it never really deceived myself, for a time satisfied the one craving passion that burned in my breast.

One particular morning, following a night when there had been a violent storm in the Channel, I found the cluster of readers greater than usual and most of the newspapers engaged ; so, after bespeaking the Melbourne Argus of my neighbour, I took up a journal which happened to be lying on the table, in order to fill up the time. I found that it was a stale copy of the Cape Monitor, and whilst casting my eye over it in a careless manner, lighted upon the following item of intelligence :—

“ We have news from Graham’s Town up to the 16th, and are happy to state that, with the exception of the serious outrage committed on the 10th at the farm and station of Mr Buckle, tranquillity continues to be ensured, and the natives are settling down to peaceable pursuits. As re-

gards the inroad, in the course of which Mr Buckle's outbuildings were burnt down and his cattle driven, suspicion still attaches itself to the notorious chief Pandilla, who has on previous occasions shown himself sufficiently troublesome. The punishment inflicted upon his people by the Light Brigade, under the command of Brigadier the Hon. Algernon Markham, for a while produced its effect, but this lesson seems to have been forgotten."

"Our respected fellow-colonist, Mr Buckle, is at the present time in Graham's Town, and every disposition is shown to make him some compensation for his heavy loss. He has resided amongst us many years, and is highly respected, as is also his estimable wife. Some of our elder subscribers may recognise in Mr Buckle the former owner of the schooner *Albatross*, with which he first opened up the trade between the Mauritius and the then infant city of Melbourne. It was in the course of one of his voyages that he was the fortunate means of rescuing from a watery grave

a fine infant, which he has since brought up and adopted as his daughter. This child, who is now with her reputed parents in Graham's Town, has since grown up a fine girl some ten years of age, and, by her modest manners and interesting appearance, bears ample testimony to the kind treatment she has received at the hands of her warm-hearted protectors. Mr Buckle, it may be remembered, observed during a heavy gale something drifting in the open sea, and humanely kept his vessel on the tack, whilst he himself put out in his boat, although the waves were running high at the time. When he reached the object in view, he was much grieved to discover that it was the body of a very fine young woman lashed to a few spars, and who had been dead about an hour. Across the breast of its unfortunate mother was extended carefully an infant some two or three months old, which still clung to her although itself quite insensible. By the humane efforts of Mr Buckle the poor child was restored to life, and the worthy man has since taken the entire charge of

her. There was nothing found on the corpse of the mother to enable Mr Buckle to identify either parent or child, but he surmises that they were part of the passengers of a large ship which he saw through his glass burning to the water's edge, while he was riding out the gale but totally unable to render any assistance. The ship Jessalore, the Magnusen, the Trident, and several other first-class vessels, were lost in the course of this stormy year."

I could read no more—my head swam round—I fell into a swoon. On coming to my senses, I found a medical man standing over me, and the waiter, together with two or three persons in the room, unloosing my neckcloth. When I appeared to regain my recollection, they were very anxious to learn the cause of this sudden attack, but were satisfied at my telling them briefly that I had just read some information concerning some long-lost relatives of whose fate I had been in doubt for the last ten years. I then hurried from the coffee-house, with a heart too full of emotion for utterance.

The intelligence of which I had so long dreamed—wandered after throughout both hemispheres, and in a ten years' weary pilgrimage—had been vouchsafed to me at last. I had learned that my darling child was alive—could assure myself that she would be restored to my arms. I saw her before me—I heard her speak, and call me by the endearing name of her long-lost father, and print kisses on my cheek; and although severed for ten years from the protector who would have proudly watched over the only tie which united him to the world, Providence had not in the meantime abandoned my child. She had raised up for her kind protectors, people perhaps better trained to the task of rendering her a virtuous and amiable woman than her own fitful uncertain parent, and when he reclaimed her he would find her worthy of the affection and not unfitted for the wealth he was about to shower upon her. For I had wealth now, which I had ungratefully spurned from me at the time; and what a providential boon had it been! It had not been bestowed upon me

for my own sake, but as a means of shielding my dear child from the same vicissitudes of life and dreadful misfortunes which had surrounded her unhappy parents even before their marriage.

By the time I reached my apartments, the excitement of my feelings had completely carried me away, and I could no longer restrain my raptures. I rushed into the sitting-room, and paced it up and down like a madman. I sang—I talked to myself—I called my own name to witness that I was the happiest mortal on the face of the earth, and protested that I should be profane if I ever asked another worldly blessing. I went upon my knees, clasping my hands together and pouring out incoherent ejaculations and praises to Heaven, whilst the tears streamed down my cheeks, and then rushed off to the looking-glass to ascertain that I really bore my own features, or was not wandering in some deluding dream which could not stand a test of reality like this. I kept repeating to myself, “the Cape Monitor—yes, it

was in the Cape Monitor," and altogether acted like a maniac—although if this were to be a lunatic, I might well weep when restored to my senses.

After a while this fit of rapture, like every other violent excitement, wore itself out, and being utterly exhausted, I opened the door into the adjoining room, and threw myself on to the bed in a state of mental prostration. I closed my eyes, for they were unable to endure the light of the sun, and a voice began to sing in my ears, which appeared to come off from the sea in a sad and distant wail. It recalled to memory my wife—my dear Clarissa, who was found drifting a cold pale corpse on the uncharitable dreary waste of the waters—and bade me conjure up in my thoughts the long agony she endured when driving through the gale, with no covering save the sky above her—no condoling voice: only the hoarse bluster of the storm as it whistled round her head. What were her sufferings as she felt life slowly ebbing away—casting her languid eyes on the poor infant at her bosom,

and tortured with the reflection that when she had herself been released from her earthly sufferings, her babe would be left to the mercy of the elements, canopied only by the vault of heaven, and clasped to a corpse, endowed as it was with just sense sufficient to feel the misery it must undergo, but not with intelligence to bear up against cold, hunger, and desolation ?

Had these reflections ever occurred to my mind before ? or were they not born of the very transports which struggled in my breast, when I learned that I might yet reclaim my darling child ? If so, would they not henceforth become entangled with that beloved object of my affection beyond all power of extrication, and for ever dash the sweetness of my happiness with a bitter draught of melancholy ? Would they not rise up like a mournful apparition whenever I looked proudly upon my child, or spoke to her with a parent's affection ? Whilst I clasped her between my widowed knees at night, and she called me by the endearing name of father, should I not forget that a

child's voice was on my ear, and hear nothing save this sad wailing dirge floating along like the swell of a distant organ from the heaving breast of the ocean, and raising its sad voice above the blustering of the hurricane? After I had leaned over her bed in the twilight, kissing her cheeks and leaving her to the protection of Heaven with the blessing of a father, and then threw myself upon my own couch, would not my eye paint on the screen of the darkness a melancholy portraiture of a misery that no present happiness must cancel from my memory—the picture of that long heavy swell of the ocean, and a pale phantom careering through the billows, the image of Clarissa, drifting before her wretched husband just at arm's-length—that husband totally unable to rescue her?

And then the current of my thoughts flowed in another channel. I called to mind a woman whom I had at one time loved, although not so well and wisely as my own meek gentle wife—one whom for a time I placed in the shrine of my ambition—one whom I only ceased to worship because she

sternly forbade me to call myself her votary any longer. Was it sinful that I mingled my heartfelt regrets for the dead Clarissa with the personification of a stately form laid to her rest in the calm recesses of the sea, coffined there between two gray rocks which hindered the green waters from visiting her too rudely, flowing in and out on their charitable errand of shrouding her noble form with a delicate cerecloth of amber mosses and crimson weeds? I beheld the broad ample forehead, now cold and white as marble, with the eyelids closed reverently beneath, and the lips just parted as if she breathed in her sleep, and the fair tresses wound around her temples—and there she was placed at her last rest, as tranquilly as though she reclined with her lofty father and lordly progenitors in the mausoleum at Chartley-Markham, with scutcheons suspended over her monument, and a gilded epitaph, recording the worldly pomp and dignity of the handful of ashes enclosed within its sanctuary, engraved upon the face of the monument. Somehow or other the thought was a

soothing one, and while I dwelt upon it, the tumult of my spirits died away, and, just as the setting sun threw its farewell beam between the curtains, I was lulled into a sleep.

## CHAPTER XXI.

SOME time elapsed ere I regained anything resembling composure, or indeed the full possession of my senses ; but the moment I did so, I rushed off to Mrs Saunders, in order to acquaint her with my unexpected good fortune. We shed many tears together over the fate of my poor Clarissa, and I renewed, in my good friend's presence, the vow I had previously taken, never to unite myself to another during the remainder of my brief sojourn upon earth ; considering myself, as I did, still the husband of one who only waited for me to rejoin her at an abiding place to which she had proceeded a little before her time. On my return home, I

wrote two letters to Mr Buckle, one at Cape Town and the other at Graham's Town, informing him that I was the father of the child he had so charitably rescued from a watery grave, and would be on the voyage out to reclaim her by the time he received my communication.

I commenced making my arrangements without delay; but was chagrined by the discovery that the steamer which carried out the mail would not start for a fortnight, and that, since a speedy passage could not be obtained in any other manner, I must restrain my impatience until the time appointed for her departure. The loss of time was in reality not much; but my impatience to regain my child grew so intense, that every day wasted appeared a year, and I did nothing during the constrained pause in my movements but pace the streets incessantly, wandering through them in a kind of day-dream, of which my child of course was the engrossing topic. On the morning preceding that on which the steamer was really to start, I woke up suddenly from one of these reveries, and found myself

opposite a stately building which I did not recognise. Several groups were passing in between a pair of gilded bronze gates, and sauntering up the steps leading to an imposing portico. I asked one of these persons what was the name of the building, and he rather smiled at my ignorance as he informed me that it was the British Museum.

I replied by apologizing for the trouble I had given him, and stated that during my absence from England—for I had been abroad many years—the fabric I supposed had been completed. I then followed my informant into the Museum, and discovered myself walking down the gallery of Antiquities before I well knew what I was about ; but was at last roused from something like a brown study by encountering a pair of human-headed lions and bulls, and beyond them a narrow room containing the antiquities from Nineveh, some prints of which I had seen in an illustrated journal during my residence in Australia. As I had been walking at a rapid pace, I was glad to go into the saloon and sit

down on the first bench that offered itself, gazing, or pretending to gaze, at the monarch on a large slab of alabaster just before me.

I had not rested myself more than five minutes, when a little lady, very quietly dressed and accompanied by three children, entered the room by the same door, and took her stand before the slab adjoining that with which I pretended to be engaged. The party was evidently not made up of mere holiday sight-seers ; at least the lady was none, for she had visited the Museum in order to improve the minds of the young people with her, and at once began questioning them in Scripture history, a subject the two elder ones had at their fingers' ends. The little creatures—they were girls—had pointed features, quick gray eyes, and sharp shrill voices, which foretold that when they came to woman's estate, an unruly husband who fell into the power of either of them would have an unquiet life of it ; but they were evidently at present under strict discipline, and were pretty well-behaved playthings.

The third child, a fine dark-eyed rosy-cheeked boy about three or four years old, appeared rather restless, for he clung to the lady's gown very tightly, and turned his head back with his large eyes fixed full in my face, as if appealing to me for protection. I was puzzled to guess what frightened the child, until, on looking at the tablet before me, I found that he had planted himself opposite to one of these grim eagle-headed figures which now and then wait upon the King of Nineveh, and that the sight of such a monster shook his courage.

I was amused at the terror depicted on the features of the fine little fellow, and spoke a few encouraging words to him, telling him not to be frightened. At the sound of my voice, the lady—who was just then busy impressing some new fact on her children's memories—gave a slight start, at the same time turning round her head, and the moment our eyes met we recognised each other. Time had done his work upon both, and I looked no doubt haggard and careworn enough; but, on

the other hand, I was really not best pleased with the peculiar expression of caution and seriousness which appeared stamped on the once joyous features of an old friend. She not only looked older than she ought to have done, but there was a subdued restrained air about her, such as we notice in a person rather kept under and compelled to think before she speaks, for fear of some pragmatal husband or father. The brown hair still curled rather profusely on each side of her face, but it had lost its fine gloss entirely, and the full speaking expression of the open eye had disappeared. Still there was enough quiet sweetness left in what were the remains of a very pretty face, to enable me to recognise it as that of Mrs Paul Sadgrove, formerly Fanny Gently; and she had evidently in turn discovered the mere ruins of the features of Maurice Elvington, although she eyed me with an uncertain look, as if doubtful whether she ought to allow herself to claim acquaintance with such a person.

However, after glancing up the gallery, probably

to ascertain that no listener was behind her, Fanny's good heart got the better of her caution, and she held out her hand in the old cordial manner, saying that she was glad to see me in England once more. She then made a slight pause, and seemed dubious as to the propriety of the step she was taking, but at last said :—

“ I am afraid to inquire after your family, Mr Elvington, for I have heard that you were unfortunate enough to lose your wife while in Australia. But these matters are not in our dispensation, and we must be thankful both when blessings are bestowed upon us and also when they are taken away.”

Something just then knocked at my breast, and told me not to wring Fanny's heart by a full detail of my misfortunes, so I briefly replied, that it was true that I had been severed from a wife to whom I had every reason to feel much attached. I added, that I was not settled in England, but was going abroad the very next day to rejoin my only child, from whom I had been sepa-

rated many years. Anxious to change the subject, I forced a gaiety I by no means felt, and congratulated Mrs Sadgrove on the little family about her, telling her that she looked quite matronly in the midst of them.

“I can recognise,” I said, “the parentage of these two pretty little girls at a glance, but that fine boy is a puzzle to me. He is just like your sister Amelia put into a boy’s frock and round hat. How is my old playfellow? I trust that she is well and happy.”

“Oh!” answered Mrs Sadgrove, smiling with all a mother’s gratification at the compliment I paid to the personal appearance of her children, and looking for a few minutes just like Fanny Gently again, “you have some reason to inquire after Amelia, Mr Elvington, for she is always talking about you even to this day. But you seem to have forgotten that my sister has had time to grow up into a beautiful young woman. Yes, really,” said Fanny, in a wondering tone of voice, as if such an occurrence to a young lady kept so

strictly to juvenile accomplishments and the twelve tribes of Israel, was not after all quite within the bounds of credibility, "Amelia has positively grown a woman, Mr Elvington, and at last ran away from my poor papa at an earlier age than I did myself—too early for such a giddy thing as she always was and is. These two little girls are mine as you say, but my young friend here is the eldest child of Amelia and Mr Simmers. You remember Master Simmers, that nice young gentleman who was down with us at Loughton, when—when"—

Here Fanny paused in some confusion, probably recollecting that it was not exactly correct in a married lady to allow herself to call to mind any event which might have caused her to leave the church with any other name than the one she had the good fortune to carry through life; and, in order to relieve her embarrassment, I remarked that I recollect Simmers perfectly, and always understood that he and Amelia were some day to be man and wife.

“ Yes,” said Fanny, evidently pleased at getting out of her little scrape so easily, “ they made a match of it after all, although at one time Simmers went off because Amelia flirted too much with somebody else, and they are now wasting their time, like two idle foolish things as they are, at the seaside, living upon their own private property. I assure you that Mr Sadgrove does not at all approve of Simmers’s conduct, and would compel him to employ himself in some useful manner if he had any control over his actions; which of course he has not. Simmers was always a restless do-nothing young fellow, and the older he grows the worse he gets. And yet my poor papa would frequently tell us that he had first-rate abilities, and might if he pleased have been one of the best lawyers in the profession. You are aware, Mr Elvington, that my papa died last year?”

“ I had not heard the painful intelligence,” I replied; “ but received some years since a letter from Mr Gently which led me to suspect that his health was declining. I respected and honoured

your father more than any other man with whom I had intercourse, and am sorry that such a conscientious adviser and kind-hearted man has no longer the power of being useful to his friends and connexions.

“Indeed, Mr Elvington,” said Mrs Sadgrove, shedding a few affectionate tears, “it is very gratifying to us all to hear in what a respectful manner every one who knew my poor papa speaks of him now he is removed from us. As for my husband, he positively idolizes his memory. My father did not long survive my poor mamma, to whom he was devotedly attached, and they both lie buried in one grave. Papa and mamma often used to talk about you, Mr Elvington—especially my mamma, who would regret that you were not among us all once more, and that she could no longer busy herself by getting the little bedroom ready for your use. Even to talk of these things brings to my mind Highgate-rise; but I do not know whether I ought to be desirous that you should see it again, for it is dreadfully altered, and you will find no Gentlys living

there now. Amelia married away before my papa's death, and Mary-Ann, who has turned herself into an old maid and wears a cap, has long since left the neighbourhood."

"I trust that Miss Gently is well and happy wherever she is residing," was my remark, in a cold tone of voice.

"Oh, yes!" said Fanny, "and it is by the merest accident that you did not meet her here to-day. Mary-Ann has made her home with Mr Sadgrove and myself, and finds her sphere of duty and activity in assisting me in the management of my household and family. You know how exceedingly well she and my dear Paul always got on together, and will not be surprised to learn that the same cordiality still exists between them. Mary-Ann has a decided temper, and is at times particular and positive, but, on the whole, I cannot express the obligations I am under to her for the excellent advice she is always giving me. What between my sister and Mr Sadgrove, who is really very clever in these matters, I am quite relieved of

the care of my own family, and have nothing to do but to walk about the squares with my two little girls and enjoy myself as I please, just as if I were Fanny Gently once more. But you know, Mr Elvington, that one's old happy girlish days can never come back, and that it is quite useless for us to regret the flight of time or wish ourselves young again."

Our conversation had now been prolonged to an unreasonable length, and as several other parties were entering the gallery, I thought it best to bring it to a conclusion. I shook Mrs Sadgrove warmly by the hand—kissed the three little children—sent a friendly message to Amelia, and a jocose one to Simmers, advising him not "to pitch into his little fellow" to an unreasonable extent, and hurried into the gallery of Antiquities. My departure loosed the tongues of the two little girls, and I was just able to overhear the elder one taking her younger sister up for not being "accurate" in some information she hazarded respecting Esarhaddon. As I quitted the Museum, the

thought struck me that I could understand why the countenance of Mrs Sadgrove wore such a subdued expression, since she had taken the trouble to inform me that Miss Gently had made her home in the family-circle, and that Mr Paul and his wife's strong-minded sister were as cordial as ever. Nay, I doubted very much, whether, between the two, Fanny's power of exercising her own will under her own roof had not become rather limited —so limited, indeed, that she was not at all times unwilling to escape from the house in the rather more endurable custody of the two little girls, who were perhaps already beginning to put some small amount of restraint upon their gentle and yielding parent.

## CHAPTER XXII.

A FEW words will suffice to bring my story to a conclusion. I had a favourable passage out to the Cape, from whence I forward this chapter, and after landing lost no time in my inquiries after Mr Buckle, the kind protector of my orphaned daughter. I learned that he had returned to his farm and station near Graham's Town, and immediately went up the country in search of him. A few short hours were all between me and the object of my disconsolate search for ten years—a ride of a certain number of miles, and I should be reunited to my long-lost child.

My imagination had been filled with but one

image since the happy day when I first ascertained that she had been so miraculously preserved for me—preserved to be the solace of a parent heart-broken with regret and self-reproach. I had dreamed of my dear child by night and day—pictured her to my mind's eye—scanned her features as in a glass—heard her speak—seen the play of her countenance—followed her as she moved ; but had I not allowed fancy, revelling in the rainbow tints of her own unsubstantial shadowings forth, to portray for me something too excellent, too admirable to be true ? Now that the realization of the hopes of years was at hand, had I been all the while luring myself on to a severe disappointment ? The thought depressed me at the commencement of my journey, and gradually mastered my self-possession as every mile took me further away from Graham's Town, in the direction of Mr Buckle's farm. At last I positively crawled along the road, and by the time the out-buildings of the station came in view, had half-determined to turn back. However, I mustered my resolution and rode on.

I was reunited to my child, and—oh, joy!—was not disappointed when I held her in my arms. I gazed upon her fondly, but with a scrutiny determined not to be deceived. I had not been deluding myself. I saw before me a tall and beautiful girl, just budding with the growth of that precocious climate into the graceful woman. Clarissa must have resembled her at fifteen or sixteen years of age, and the sight of this surviving pledge of our affections brought back my poor wife too painfully to my recollection: I covered my eyes with my hand; but Clarissa before them drifting on the waves!

My daughter herself seemed at first perplexed—bewildered, and was unwilling to quit the kind protectors whom she had up to this time regarded as her parents. But I was not displeased with this—the very reluctance with which she relinquished calling them father and mother was full of promise of affection to me, when time should have allowed those mysterious ties which link children to the authors of their being to reach

something like a ripe maturity. After a few days' intercourse, the germs of these feelings might be watched as they began to dawn in her breast—every hour gave them vigour, and by the time I am writing, my dear daughter has become reconciled to the transfer of her affections, and lavishes upon her long-lost parent the most endearing and captivating tenderness.

When I assert that she will soon be a second Clarissa, I can bestow upon her no greater praise. She resembles her ill-fated parent in disposition as she does in features: there is the same quiet gentleness of temper as well as gracefulness of form. Although she never knew her mother, she is anxious to resemble her, and often asks me questions respecting her, the tears all the while standing in her own large blue eyes. I would fain relieve the smart of a self-reproving conscience by sharing it with the only being on earth who could fully sympathize with its anguish; but it would be selfishness and something worse to dash the hopefulness of the budding woman with even a few

bitter drops of sorrow, in order merely to allay my own sufferings. I am therefore—at some cost to myself, I admit—solicitous to spare my daughter's feelings, and cannot prevail upon myself to tell her the worst concerning her mother. She believes, then, that Clarissa had breathed her last before I committed her corpse to the waves; but when I relate the mournful story, even with the most painful part of it omitted, a tender pensiveness steals over her features which endears her to her surviving parent more than he can trust himself to own: for some chance also might take her from me, and leave me utterly desolate and heartbroken.

After the lapse of a few weeks, we visited the Mauritius, and stood hand in hand over the grave of Clarissa. It is a lovely spot, surrounded by the gorgeousness of a tropical vegetation. The kind-hearted negroes who dwell in the neighbourhood still relate the story of the poor outcast to each other, and have planted a little garden over the grave, which they keep carefully weeded and stocked with the most beautiful flowers. I threw

myself upon it heartbroken, and carelessly crushing the flowers as they bent beneath my weight—my own feelings were more crushed within me, and I could shed no tear to relieve them—I could only vent my anguish in groans. Even the happiness I had enjoyed in the society of my child appeared ready to rise in judgment against me. I was alive and had one tie on earth at least to gild the evening of my days. She was in the tomb, “out of the sun and air,” lonely, abandoned. We just came to glance at her grave, and then take our departure, a happy father and his child. Could I ever tear myself away from the victim whom my rashness—how many offences are summed up in that word—had deprived of the proud and joyous feelings of a mother as she watches her daughter just gliding into womanhood, without committing a new crime by again abandoning my wife, while out of mere selfishness I reclaimed my daughter?

Whilst I was torn with these agonizing emotions, my daughter spoke to me, pouring balm and honey into my bleeding wounds. Her words were

artless enough, but the consolation administered by them seemed scarcely to proceed from a child. She expressed herself in the simple language in which her kind protectors had taught her to repeat the ideas common to all of us, of reunion in another world, and pardon for offences committed in this. Methought that as I listened to her, I recognised the still soft voice of my injured wife murmured from the depths of the tomb, assuring me that she had forgiven my offences towards her, and wished me to leave her and depart in peace, accompanied by the comforter bequeathed to me. I rose from the grave, and tenderly raising the flowers where I had crushed them, took one farewell look, and then departed in silence.

I have felt more at peace with myself since that morning. I am resigned to my lot, and have reason to be grateful. I have called my daughter by the name of Clarissa, and will fulfil to her the duties of both parents. If the enjoyment of this world's felicity—such as it is—be snatched from us for ever, we can yet fulfil its duties. That is the only

real and lasting satisfaction which can be derived from this life. Would that I had known the truth earlier!

It is not my intention to return to England. The education of my dear child has not been neglected, for both Mr Buckle and his amiable wife are superior in intelligence to the majority of the colonists in their neighbourhood ; but I do not see that she will be in any respect a gainer by being exposed to the restraints and temptations of an artificial state of society. The Cape is her native country, and I am quite willing to end my own days in any part of the globe which will promise her happiness. A tranquil walk through life, in accordance with the associations which have grown up around her childhood and the habits she has acquired, are all I am desirous of ensuring to her. The colony appears to be now in a settled state, but should troubles again break out and compel us to seek a more peaceful home, I should bend my steps towards the quiet valleys of one of our younger settlements—in all probability New Zealand. A

cottage on the seashore, the shadow of a mountain in the distance, and the blue waves at my feet singing a dirge—which I can at will convert, as I pace along the beach, into a mournful yet soothing requiem for the repose of my departed Clarissa—is the only home my weary spirit covets ; while, blest with the company of her child, I desire no other society.

THE END.



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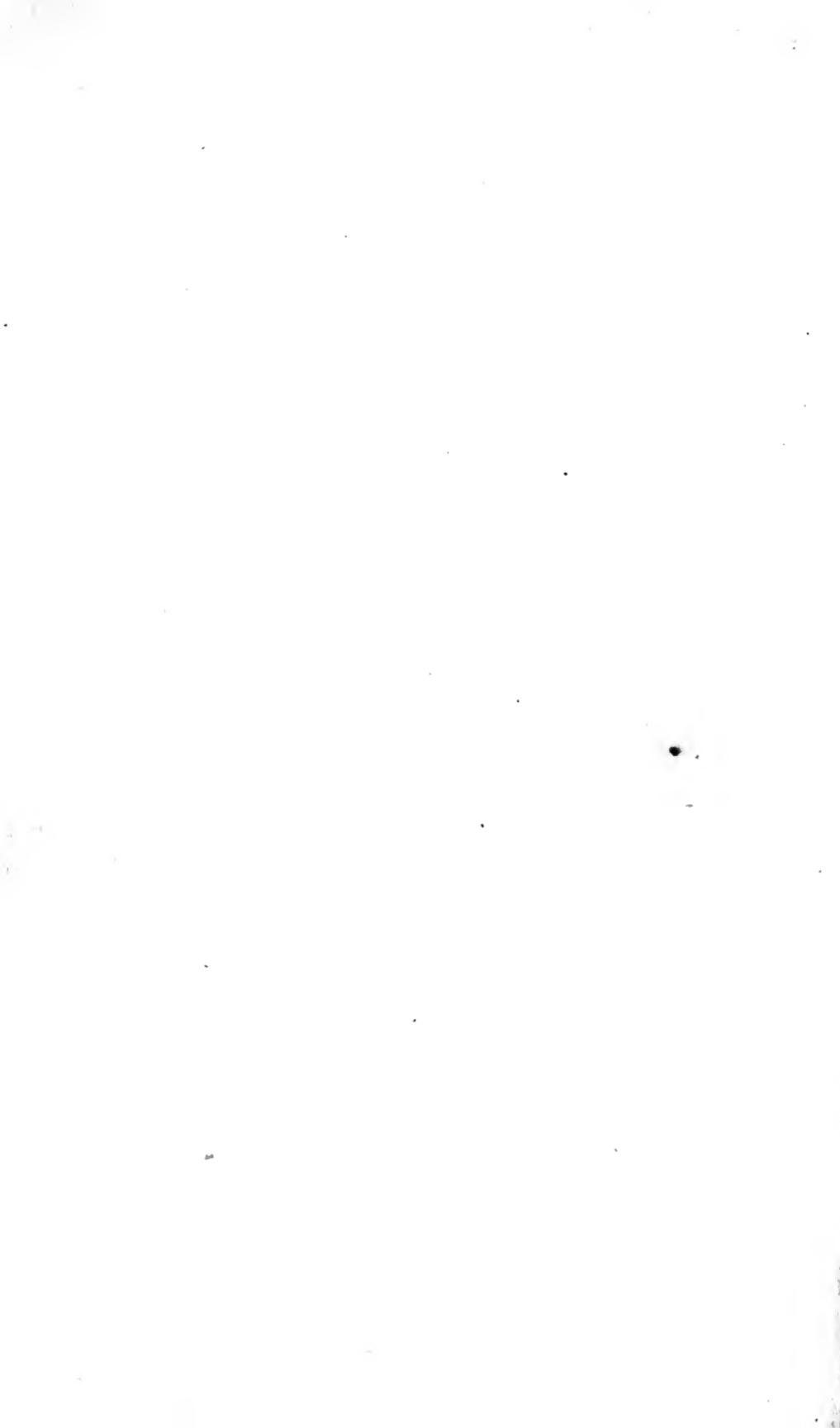
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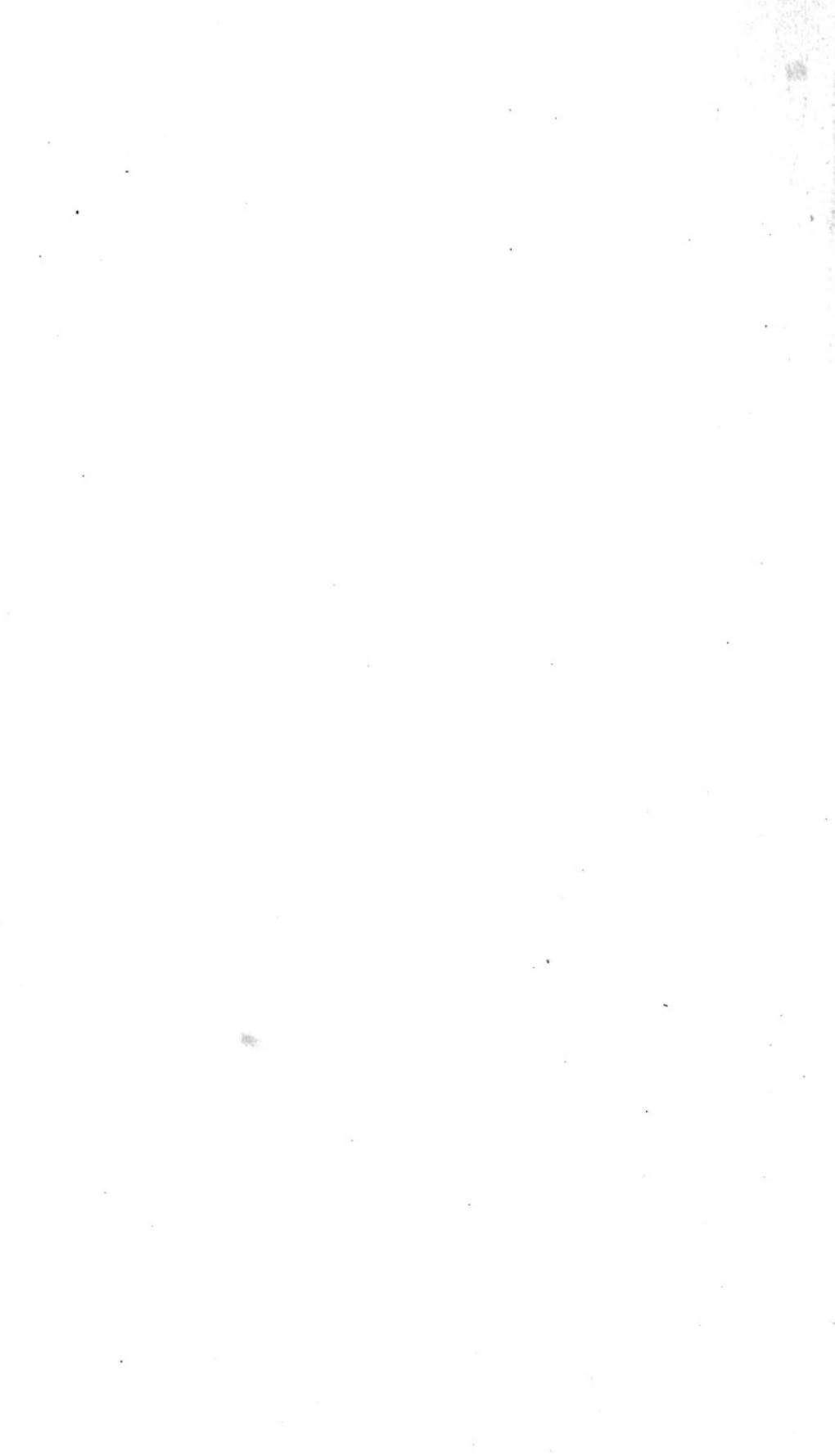
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